# THE MESSAGE OF PLATO

"*That which is called the Christian Religion existed among the Ancients, and never did not exist, from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh, at which time the true religion which already existed began to be called Christianity.*"

ST. AUGUSTINE

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
JUN 29 1936
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# THE MESSAGE OF PLATO

## A RE-INTERPRETATION OF THE "REPUBLIC"

BY

EDWARD J. URWICK, M.A.

HEAD OF THE RATAN TATO DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND ADMINISTRATION, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
AUTHOR OF "THE PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL PROGRESS"

METHUEN & CO. LTD.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON

*First Published in 1920*

# PREFACE

I HAVE attempted in this book the very bold task of presenting a new interpretation of Plato's teaching, as contained in his masterpiece, the *Republic*. The interpretation is based largely upon the philosophic thought of ancient India—or rather, upon the Indian religious thought, since, for the Indian sages, as for Plato, philosophy had little meaning except in relation to what we call religion. Consequently my interpretation is at bottom a religious interpretation. It is therefore in direct antagonism to the interpretation of most recognised commentators. For the latter have interpreted the book in accordance with their dominant interests : they treat it from the standpoint of politics, ethics and metaphysics, and criticise it as a philosophic, not a super-philosophic, treatise. The accepted title of the dialogue—Concerning a Polity or Republic—seems to justify this attitude ; the alternative title of the work—Concerning Justice—also appears to justify the view that the book was a contribution to political and ethical speculation. But the Greek word " Dikaiosune," here translated " Justice," means much more : its full meaning is Righteousness ; and this, I believe, gives a truer clue to the meaning of the dialogue. For it is a discussion of Righteousness in all its forms, from the just dealing of the law-abiding citizen to the spirit of holiness in the saint.

I do not claim to be at all a qualified commentator. Indeed, my sole qualifications are my devotion to Plato, and my firm belief that the *Republic* is really his supreme attempt to show us how the human soul can fit itself for that realisation of the divine Good which is the goal of every soul's life. And if this is the motive, then perhaps I may be pardoned for trying to force it upon the notice of others. I may be quite wrong in my view ; but I can only urge, as Socrates himself does in the Republic,

" This at any rate is how I see the matter, though God knows whether I am right or not."

The book is intended for the general reader rather than for the scholar. I have therefore omitted many sections dealing with special topics, such as the origin of the doctrine of Ideas and the Platonic conception of the sciences. I have also reluctantly omitted a long enquiry into the channels by which Indian thought penetrated Greece in the fifth and sixth centuries B.C. Still more reluctantly, I have omitted a detailed comparison between the Indian and the Greek metaphysical speculations. Consequently it must appear that I make some very big assumptions without attempting to justify them. I certainly do assume a fairly direct contact between India and Greece, just as I assume that the influence was profoundly felt by Plato. And for the latter assumption I rely here solely upon internal evidence. Even this is very inadequately dealt with, for lack of space has prevented me from collating the *Republic* with such important dialogues as the Parmenides, the Sophistes, the Philebus and the Timæus. I hope that critics will make some allowance for the book's shortcomings on the ground of these inevitable omissions.

I desire to express my thanks to Mr. J. A. Hobson, who read through an earlier draft of the book and made many valuable criticisms ; to Mr. R. H. Tawney, who read the whole book in manuscript, and suggested several important alterations and additions ; and to my wife most of all, without whose help I could not have written the book at all.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to many Indian writers and teachers, who have helped me to gain what understanding I possess of Vedanta. In particular I would mention the writings of the late Swamis, Vivekananda and Swarupananda ; of Sri Ramanathan (Parananda), of Harendranath Maitra, whose little book on Hinduism gives a very good picture of the spiritual life of India, and of Babu Bhagavan Das, whose book, the *Science of Social Organisation in the Light of the Laws of Manu*, I have used extensively in the introductory chapters. But I owe a far greater debt to Ananda Acharya (Professor S. N. Baral), to whose teaching and example alike I owe most of the knowledge I have of the true meaning of the spiritual philosophy of Vedanta.

Perhaps it may be well to explain here that the name Vedanta

(meaning literally the end or goal of wisdom) signifies the religious philosophy of ancient India, contained in the Vedic and other Sanskrit literature, dating for the most part from a period two to six thousand years ago. Its purest doctrines are contained in the Upanishads, which belong to the later part of the Vedic period ; and its essence is distilled in a single poem, the Bhagavad Gita, or Divine Song (often referred to simply as the Gita), which was probably written about three centuries before Christ. There are other Gitas, also held in reverence by Indians ; but the Bhagavad Gita is perhaps the nearest approach to a " Bible " in India, for it is revered as the greatest fount of full spiritual teaching. The religion of India, however, is not contained in any holy scriptures, nor is its authority dependent upon any written text. It is always and only a reality depending upon individual intuition : its mark is spirituality—in any and every form.

There are several English translations of the Gita ; Sir Edwin Arnold's poem, " The Song Celestial," is perhaps the best for English readers, for it best conveys the spirit of the original. A short and popular account of Vedanta doctrines is contained in Max Müller's book on the subject.

# CONTENTS

## PART I

### The Ancestry of Plato's Faith


| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| I. | The Quest of Socrates: the Western Ancestry of Plato's Doctrine | 1 |
| II | The Vedic Interpretation of Human Life: the Eastern Ancestry of Plato's Doctrine | 15 |


## PART II

### The Preparation of the Soul, and an Account of the Righteousness of the Lower Path


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| III. | Analysis of the "Republic," Book I and Part of Book II—The Explanation of the Question "What is the Nature of Righteousness?"; and the Construction of the Good State | 42 |
| IV. | Analysis of the "Republic," Book II (part) and Books III and IV—The Purification of the Good State, and the Education of the Good Soul—The Definition of the Righteous Citizen | 60 |


## PART III

### Spiritual Realisation, or the Path of Religion


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| V. | Analysis of the "Republic," Book V (part)—The Community of Occupations for Men and Women; the Community of Husbands, Wives and Children; the Kingship of the Philosopher | 79 |
| VI. | An Explanatory Chapter Concerning the Conception of the Upper Path or Path of Religion | 95 |
| VII. | Analysis of the "Republic," Book V (part) and Book VI (part)—The Meaning of Philosophy, or Wisdom-Religion; and the Characteristics of the Philosopher or Seer | 101 |
| VIII. | Analysis of the "Republic," Book VI (part) and Book VII—The Full Meaning of Spiritual Realisation, and the Final Education of the Philosopher | 115 |
| IX. | The End of Book VII of the "Republic"—The Disciple's Return to Active Life; the Philosopher's Return to the World; the Possible Salvation of Society | 145 |

## PART IV

### The Dangers of the Lower Path


| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| X. | Analysis of the "Republic," Books VIII and IX—The Causes of the Degeneration of the Good State and of the Good Man | 165 |
| XI. | The Tenth Book of the "Republic"—The Banishment of Art and Poetry; and the Account of the Soul's Immortality, and the Law of Reincarnation | 192 |


## PART V

### Summary and Discussion


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| XII. | Discussion of the Doctrine in the Light of Modern Thought | 220 |
| | Index and Glossary | 261 |

# THE MESSAGE OF PLATO

## PART I

## THE ANCESTRY OF PLATO'S FAITH

### CHAPTER I

#### THE QUEST OF SOCRATES. THE WESTERN ANCESTRY OF PLATO'S DOCTRINE.

PLATO was the disciple of Socrates. He was not the pupil of a great teacher: he was the disciple of a great master. This relationship is quite unfamiliar to us, at any rate in the region of philosophical study. We recognise some great exponents—thinkers, discoverers, system-builders—and each of these has his followers, acknowledging their debt, gladly paying tribute to their teacher. But the full relationship of disciple to master is hardly known nowadays, except in the East. In India we find it still: there, every seeker for truth seeks first for a Guru or master to be his guide in the quest; and the Guru becomes his enlightener, his inspiration, and the life-long object of his fullest devotion and reverence. The Guru alone can "dispel his darkness" (this is the literal meaning of the word); the Guru alone can turn the rusty lock of the closed chamber of the soul and open the door to light. For the Guru is one who has himself seen the truth and lives it; who can therefore teach the wisdom which is also life. And, in return, the disciple hugs close the unpayable debt, glorying in it as a possession beyond price. To the Guru he owes the knowledge of his own soul, the certainty of his immortality, the vision of heaven which he may see whenever he closes his eyes to the moving world. In this sense Socrates and Plato were

Guru and disciple. Socrates was a true Guru in every essential but one. Like every true Guru, he sought for souls capable of the search for truth, souls not yet tarnished, not yet bewitched by the great sorcerer—the world. Like every true Guru, he tested them, each and all, rejecting those who failed in the spirit of constancy and earnestness. Like every true Guru, he taught those who could be taught, not by thrusting conviction bodily into their minds, but first and most by the negative process of convincing them of the futility of their accepted beliefs and dogmas, and so preparing them for the task of striking the sparks of truth out of the clean flint of their own deeper consciousness. But, unlike most Gurus, Socrates never claimed that he had himself seen the truth. He delighted in confessing his ignorance : that was his great " irony." He loved to put his work and his power on a lowly level. " My mother was a midwife," he would say, " and I must have inherited a little of her art. For this is all I can do : I can bring truth to the birth in the labouring souls of others." Yet he did not pretend to be nothing more than a seeker among other seekers. He had some convictions of truth so sure and so strong that he never hesitated to call them inspirations. He *knew* that the Reality which truth would reveal is good and nothing but good, and the cause and creator of all good everywhere. He *knew* that this Reality could be found, if the search were only earnest enough. And, most of all, he knew what was *not* the road to it : he knew that the way of the world was the wrong road, that most of its estimates were false estimates, its knowledge unreal knowledge, its wisdom little better than foolishness. He followed his faith unfalteringly : it caused him to tell his world, and most of its wise men, that they were wholly deluded. He followed his " inherited art," his great natural gift, unfalteringly : this caused him to expose and prove false every convention and dogma and belief behind which comfortable worldliness entrenches itself. His life-work earned for him his death, at the hands of his world, " for corrupting the young and perverting religion." It was the inevitable wage of such a work in such a world. But it earned for him something more : the reverence of a little band of disciples, and the passionate devotion of the greatest of these disciples—a devotion so strong in a disciple so great as to immortalise not the name only but the character and life and mind of the master.

Plato was a disciple in the completest Indian sense. Just as an Indian disciple prefaces everything he says or writes about wisdom and truth with the invocation "Glory to Guru," and writes, not in his own name, but in the name of some spiritual quality which his master has taught him to love; so Plato, throughout the greater part of his long life, put all his thoughts into the mouth of Socrates, as if to show that the teaching was his master's, not his own. The most beautiful of all the dialogues, such as the Phaedo, are like hymns in his master's honour; in all the dialogues, with few exceptions, Socrates is the chief speaker—critic, questioner, unveiler of error, or expounder of truth. In the few exceptions, written late in Plato's life, Socrates usually appears as a listener only—probably because his disciple felt that, so long after his master's death, his own thoughts ought no longer to appear as the direct utterances of his teacher. In the latest of all the dialogues, the Laws, Socrates does not enter at all; and for this there is perhaps the additional reason that here Plato sets himself to work out a conception peculiarly his own, relating, not to the kingdom of reality and truth, but to a second-best state on earth.

Now in the very voluminous writings which Plato lays at the feet of his master, we find not only a picture of a character and a mind of singular interest, charm and power, but also a picture of that mind absorbed in a ceaseless quest, animated throughout by a double passion—for truth and for goodness. We need not ask here how far the picture is true to the historical Socrates: the character revealed is certainly his; the nature of the quest equally certainly belongs to Socrates as he was; but the mind and thought are the mind and thought of Plato, who, taking his master's quest for his own, and his character for his own ideal, interpreted and elaborated in his own way the suggestions of his teacher. But this does not matter in the least; let us call the picture that of Socrates as Plato liked to think of him. What *is* important is that we should get a fair and true view of the picture, in order to understand the mind and the quest of Plato himself.

Let me try, first, to give an account of the quest. If we read the different dialogues in the order in which they appear to have been written, we are first of all interested and fascinated, and then (let it be confessed) a little irritated and wearied, by the

elaborate discussion of all those metaphysical and ethical conundrums with which philosophers and moralists have made us so familiar. What is knowledge? How is it possible to know anything? What is it that is known? Is there such a thing as absolute truth, or permanent fact in and behind the ever-changing universe? Is there a knowable reality? And if so, is it one or many? What are the faculties of cognition? What are the correct processes and methods of learning, of separating truth from error? What is the relation of action to knowledge? What is happiness or pleasure? Is good conduct based upon knowledge?—and of what? Can society get that knowledge, and so manage itself satisfactorily and scientifically? Are there any real teachers of political or ethical knowledge? If so, upon what is their teaching based?

These are the subjects which appear to indicate the great quest of Socrates—subjects discussed and re-discussed through hundreds of pages, with frequent excursions into less or greater matters, ranging from the derivation of words to the origin of the soul and of the universe. What are we to make of it all? We know that for more than a century before the time of Socrates most of these subjects had occupied the minds of Greek thinkers, and that various schools of thought had arisen, giving different answers—the beginnings in Europe of metaphysical and ethical philosophy. Reality is multiform and ever changing, and we know it only through the organs of sense perception; reality is one and unchangeable, and we cannot know it at all. The good is pleasure, and everyone knows it; the good is intelligent judgment, and very few can possess it. These were the types of leading theory, already fully expounded, each with its bands of supporters. Are we to conclude, then, that Socrates, entering the philosophical arena, devoted his life to carrying analysis farther, criticising, re-defining, re-combining, what his predecessors had left him, sometimes failing altogether to reach a new conclusion, sometimes abandoning the search as hopeless, sometimes merely quibbling—at very great length—sometimes really managing to reconcile conflicting ideas into a new synthesis, always carrying farther the logical method of enquiry, insisting upon a dialectical process which shall separate valid concepts from confusions? That was his quest and his work, then? That was his contribution to his world's good?

This is a very natural view to take, especially for those who have some knowledge of the history of philosophy. The Platonic Socrates (or the Socratic Plato) thus falls into his place among the builders of metaphysical, ethical, political and logical systems —a very high place, for, despite his many contradictions and failures, he undoubtedly advanced far beyond any and all of his predecessors. True, he confused matters which we think are better kept distinct : ethics with politics, and metaphysics with both. He failed to distinguish the theoretical from the practical reason, as Aristotle and Kant did. He mixed up argument with metaphor, reasoned statement with mythical story. Even his greatest contribution to metaphysical theory—the doctrine of Eternal Ideas as the great knowable reality—was presented in a confused and contradictory way. Nevertheless, he carries us a long way beyond the theories of reality and knowledge upon which he built, the theories of Heraclitus and Cratylus and Protagoras, of Anaxagoras and Parmenides and Zeno. And all through his pages there shine flashes of intuition which point far beyond his own theories, hints of fuller truth which, if only he had followed them up, might have led him even nearer to our more mature and more consistent explanation of the problems of cognition with which he struggled.

This, I say, is a very natural view. It is, on the whole, the view of most commentators. It is the academic, and therefore the sane and safe view. It is, for that reason, an utterly lifeless view, an insult to the realities by which life lives. For, candidly, is it not the case that, when we talk and read and write and puzzle our brains about the fundamental subjects of metaphysics—reality, essence, appearance, cognition ; or of ethics—the *summum bonum*, the criterion of right, the moral sense ; is it not the case that we treat the whole business as something, important doubtless, but by no means supremely important ? It is not a matter of life and death to us : it is a matter of speculative interest. If we cannot get the matter clear—well, life will go on, and happiness will not be destroyed any more than will efficiency. It is not *the* supreme thing in life ; its teachers have followers indeed, but not followers such as Pythagoras had. There are ardent followers of Green and Bradley, as once there were of Bentham and Mill ; of Hegel, as once of Hume. But would they die for the theories which they hold or follow ?

Now this is just the difference between philosophy as we think of it or look for it in the writings of Plato or anyone else, and " philosophy " as both Socrates and Plato thought of it. Put aside, if you can, the academic interest, and read the Platonic dialogues through, looking for consistency, not inconsistencies, for the One and not the Many. Then you will hardly fail to realise that, when Socrates is searching for the explanation of cognition, of reality, or of the standard of right and wrong, his quest and his interest are totally different from ours, in quality and in kind. He is out to find *life*, and the whole secret of life. It is all in all to him: not a theoretical interest, not a metaphysical or philosophic interest, but just everything that matters, the whole key to the soul's wellbeing. For this " reality " or " ens " or " essence " (a dead thing with a lifeless name in all our philosophies) is, for him, the living Good and the living God. He *must* find it, he *must* know it—in order to become good, in order to find salvation. It was not knowledge or truth which he sought, as we seek knowledge and truth. His life-search was for the knowledge which saves the soul, for the truth which reveals God, for the reality which makes goodness real, makes virtue unshakable, *realises* the perfection of the soul's relations to all existing things. His eternal questions—What do we mean by knowing ? How is knowledge possible ? are not our questions. *We* want to explain the possibility of cognition, the functions of sense and intellect in relation to a knowable universe, and the metaphysical implications of all this. But his question always meant—How are we to know Goodness in order that we may be good and a source of good in the world ? It was his faith—he never attempted to prove it—that Reality, Goodness, and God are all one. To be good, we must know this One, not as the world knows or thinks it knows facts and truths, but with a directness, a certainty, altogether different. Goodness is knowledge, therefore ; but we of the world have not got this knowledge, and therefore we are neither good nor happy, do not even know what goodness and happiness are. The world talks about virtue, about justice and right. But it is like a man talking about a weaver's shuttle when he has never seen a loom, or about steersmanship when he has never been on board a ship.

His search is not a search for perfectly unified knowledge, but for the knowledge which shall itself unify all things in heaven

and earth. He goes from teacher to teacher, searching for this but never finding it in them. The search is usually negative, critical. He examines the philosophical teachers of Greece: *they* have not found the True. He examines the moral teachers of Greece: *they* have not found the Good. He is far more concerned to criticise the latter than the former; of course: for it is not truth as a theory of knowledge which he seeks, but truth as an existent *fact*, the creator and source of all good everywhere. For this reason the Platonic Socrates in the dialogues of Plato returns again and again to the attack upon both the unconscious teachers and the professed teachers of morality or good conduct: upon the poets and politicians, and upon the Sophists and Rhetoricians. These latter he came as near hating as was possible for so gentle a nature; for knowing nothing, they professed to teach the greatest thing in the world. They were the new and fashionable Professors of Right Action and Right Speech. They were not bad men: far from it. Protagoras, the Sophist, was a very fine man with a very exalted aim; even Thrasymachus, the Rhetorician, was only unpleasant by reason of the violence of his dogmatism. But they were false teachers, because they were ignorant; dangerous teachers, because their ignorance was of the one thing that mattered. They were purveyors of food for the soul, hawkers of goods for the mind, selling for money wares blindly labelled Virtue and Knowledge. They were concocters of persuasion for the multitude; clever cooks who served up attractive dishes of Belief without Understanding. Their arts were the counterfeits of the true arts of teaching and of healing. For all they knew, they were selling poison for food, falsehood for truth, ignorance for knowledge and wrong for right. They had not got the wisdom which is also the secret of goodness.

He confused metaphysics and ethics and politics, you say? Of course he did—a noble confusion, which vitalised the truth instead of dissecting it. For how can there be separation in such a quest? Here again his faith kept the road clear for him. He *could* not think of a real cause which was not good, nor a Good which was not Nous (wisdom), nor a universe which was not both Nous and Good at bottom—and nothing else real, nor a true society which was not the incarnation of Good Nous. All his questions therefore were but modes of a single question. It appeared in many forms: What is cognition? Can virtue be

taught ? What are knowledge and ignorance ? What is false opinion ? What is the One ? What are the Many ? What is right ? What is the Ideal State ? But each and all of these forms are but aspects of the single search for the secret of life and immortality, for God and Righteousness, for that flame of knowledge which purifies the soul even as it illumines it and reveals all things to it. Each and all of the questions are but variants of the supreme quest in which and for which Socrates lived and died : " How shall we find God and be like Him ? "

Now this vital difference, which, for both the master and the disciple, turned philosophy into religion, and so fused metaphysics, ethics, politics and everything else into an indissoluble unity, is exactly the difference which distinguishes the speculations of ancient India from ours. Like us, the Indian thinkers set out to answer the question—What are knowledge and reality and truth ? Like us, they worked out their answers into elaborate philosophical systems. But, unlike us, they never dreamed of searching for a knowledge which was anything but spiritual, for a reality which was anything short of the source of eternal life, for a truth which was any less thing than the inspiration of eternal goodness. They called their philosophy Vidya, or knowledge ; but they meant by it knowledge of the spiritual by the spirit, *not* knowledge of the intelligible by the intellect. If, like most modern philosophers, they seemed in their speculations to " leave the Lord God out of the business," this was only because they related all their thought to an even greater Reality, transcending personality—just as Socrates did. And the text upon which their whole philosophy hung might serve equally well as the text of the whole Socratic philosophy :—

> " Mankind errs here
> By folly darkening knowledge. But, for whom
> That darkness of the soul is chased by light,
> Splendid and clear shines manifest the Truth,
> As if a Sun of Wisdom sprang to shed
> Its beams of dawn."[1]

But I do not, at this point, wish to dwell upon the general resemblance of the Indian and the Platonic philosophies. No doubt a modern critic could explain it all away very satisfactorily

[1] *Bhagarad Gita*, Book V. All the verse quotations given are from Sir Edwin Arnold's translation of the *Gita*, " The Song Celestial."

by saying that both represent the beginnings of the "metaphysical stage" of thought, in which the confusions of the "theological stage" have not yet been completely shaken off. My reason for noting the similarity is just this: in the Indian conception, the fusion of metaphysics with ethics and politics was as necessary and complete as was the interdependence of good living with the knowledge of the living source of good; and from this a double result followed. On the one hand, only the purified soul could ever *know* reality; on the other hand, only knowledge of Reality could make purity of soul unchangeable and personal or social goodness real. On the one hand, the equanimity of resolute self-control was a condition of the discovery of spiritual truth; on the other hand, the full vision of truth alone could make the soul for ever "lord of senses and of self." Their philosophy, therefore, was always a rule of life as well as a philosophy; it was Yoga as well as Vidya, a path of preparation for knowledge as well as an account of the knowledge to be reached. And in this the Platonic Socrates undoubtedly resembled them, not in his theory only, but in his life. His quest, as revealed in the Platonic writings, may seem obscure and confused; but the character of the seeker, like his faith, stands out with absolute clearness and consistency; stands out, also, as at once the condition and the result of his quest.

There are two dialogues in which Plato has given a picture of the character of Socrates; and these two dialogues—the Symposium and the Phaedo—are diametrically opposed to one another in the setting, the scene, and all the circumstances. The one depicts Socrates in the midst of life; the other depicts him in the presence of death. The one reveals him as a reveller among revellers, holding a feast to celebrate a great achievement on the part of one of the company; the other reveals him as a prisoner in a criminal's cell, waiting, with a few of his friends, for the sunset which marks the hour of his execution. In the one, the subject of the discussion is love; in the other, death and immortality. In the one, every member of the company becomes shamelessly drunk—except Socrates; in the other, every member of the band is overcome by grief—except Socrates. The two dialogues are even more opposed to each other than this account suggests; indeed, there are only two things in which they agree—the character of the central figure, and the gulf

which separates him from all other men. It seems to have been Plato's desire to make the contrast between the two scenes as sharp as possible, in order to throw into strong relief the fundamental quality of his master, perfect equanimity in every sort of circumstance. And the picture so presented bears an exact similitude to the character of the enlightened sage which was the ideal of the Indian Vidya :—

> " Freed
> In all his works from prickings of desire,
> Burned clean in act by the white fire of truth."
> " He unto whom—soul-centred—grief and joy
> Sound as one word ; to whose deep-seeing eyes
> The clod, the marble, and the gold are one ;
> Whose equal heart holds the same gentleness
> For lovely and unlovely things, firm-set,
> Well-pleased in praise and dispraise, satisfied
> With honour or dishonour ; unto friends
> And unto foes alike in tolerance."
> " One who
> Abandoning desires which shake the mind,
> Finds in his soul full comfort for his soul,"
> " In sorrows not dejected, and in joys
> Not over-joyed ; dwelling outside the stress
> Of passion, fear, and anger ; . . . such an one
> Bears wisdom's plainest mark."

This equanimity, the mark of wisdom, is put before us by Plato as the great characteristic of Socrates. The rest of the picture only amplifies this, at the same time softening the outline, and removing any hint of a strained austerity. He is shown to us as a man, severely temperate indeed, by habit and by choice, yet a willing guest at a feast, drinking as deep as anyone, since water and wine are alike to him, utterly unmoved by the wine, tranquilly discoursing wisdom so long as any remain sober enough to listen, and, when no one is left, as tranquilly departing to discourse wisdom to others. A lover of all beauty, attracted more than most by beauty of face and form, yet loving only with the soul, never with the senses, serenely proof against the most terrible temptations, resolute to find even in the passion of love only a stepping-stone to the love of truth. A hater of nothing, except evil and sin, and hating these, not as one who judges and condemns them in others, but as one who sees them as an involuntary blindness, a thick night of ignorance, choking the soul of the sinner, cutting it off from the good. A poor man,

since wealth had no interest for him, and the satisfactions which wealth can buy held no attraction for him; scorning to earn money by his power of teaching, since (like every Indian sage) he felt that to take money in return for a spiritual gift was a profanation of the spirit itself. A humble man, never denying his own peculiar powers, but claiming no credit for them, calling them just a strange gift from the gods, honestly convinced that the difference between himself and other men was due to a happy accident by which a vein of what the world calls madness had been embedded in his soul, equally convinced that he had no real wisdom, but only an intuition of the direction in which wisdom could be found. Never a politician; taking no part in the strifes of the political arena any more than in the competitions of the market-place, yet longing and striving to find the secret of social good, and to establish this good among men. Never contentious; unable to understand how men with immortal souls could spend their days disputing in a law-court; yet devoting most of his life to argument—not to prove a point or answer an opponent, but only to make clear to himself and others the way to truth. A peace-lover always; yet three times marching out to war, not so much for patriotism as for simple duty's sake, the duty of the citizen who owes his life to his State, whether he agrees with the sacrifice and the occasion of it or not. Utterly fearless, also, meeting the test of the great terror—death—with a tranquillity, almost a delight, which even his disciples could not understand, because his soul was rid of that "stupid estimate of things fearful" which keeps the world afraid. And, with it all, gentle, patient and courteous to everyone, even to those ignorant pretenders, the sophists and rhetoricians, who, knowing nothing, deluded the world by their claim to know everything worth teaching; even to his accusers and judges who sent him to his death; for was not their only fault the "involuntary sin" of not knowing what they did?

Such was the character of Socrates, as Plato saw it. But there was something more. The character revealed the necessary qualities of the seeker of truth: equanimity, purity, serenity and indifference to pleasure and pain; indifference also to all the world's estimates of things worth doing or worth having; yet all firmly combined with the full dutifulness of the good citizen, the industry of the good worker, the virtue of the good

man. But behind all these lay something deeper. The character was itself inspired by a faith, an intuitive certainty, that the quest had at its end a goal which might be very far away, but was real and the only reality. The sun of truth and of righteousness *did* exist: everything else was cloud or shadow—our pleasures and pursuits, our interests and opinions, even our creeds and sciences. Such a quest was worth, not one life-time, but a thousand life-times; it was a quest in which the powers of body and mind counted for little, the powers of soul for everything. Therefore it is that the picture of Socrates is always a picture of one who has a strange contempt for everything changeable, perishable, mortal; for the body and its oscillating feelings, for the senses and their fickle perceptions, for the human intellect and its relative knowledge, for human power and its unstable achievements. Therefore also it is the picture of one who has an unshakable belief in the immortality of the soul and the eternity of the good "to which it is by nature akin"; a picture of one who is carried through life, like a king among philosophers, right up to the very gate of death and beyond it, upon the firm throne of a great conviction—that the soul is "unborn, undying, indestructible, the lord of all things living": that God is truth, and is to be seen, though hardly, by the eye of the soul, when freed from the mire and weeds of desire: that all existence, all reality are one in the Good, and that the unity of Good is all-present in this multiform world—itself the ever-changing child of the eternal and the temporal, though the mists of the temporal hide the eternal from our mortal eyes: that to know and love Good, and so to be and do good, are the keys to all happiness: and that therefore it is better far and far happier for a man to suffer and be punished by men and gods for any evil that may be in him, than to escape punishment and gain enjoyment. This was the faith of the Socrates of the Phaedo, who, as he waits for the poison-cup to be brought to him, explains to his friends how he sees in death, not the end but the beginning of life; how to him this human existence is the real bondage, this mortal body the prison house and death the message of release.

Such was Plato's master, as the disciple reveals him. Such were the quest, the character and the faith of the man by whom the Platonic teaching was inspired; and these are the keys to the meaning of that teaching. Whence were they derived?

From what source did they in their turn draw their inspiration ? From his Greek predecessors and contemporaries ? It is usually maintained that the Platonic or Socratic philosophy, like the rest of Greek speculation, was original, indigenous, owing very little to any outside influence. But the quest and life and faith of Socrates were as un-Greek as anything could possibly be : that was one of the reasons why the Greeks killed him : the essence of his life belonged to a world unknown to them, and therefore dangerous in their eyes. The Platonic Socrates is never tired of asserting that he stands alone : that he differs from both predecessors and contemporaries, in thought, in aim, in interest, in method, in belief. " I alone among the Athenians hold this view "—that is his constant attitude. It is true that he owed many debts to the Greek thinkers who went before him : to the Relativists and the Absolutists, the Heraclitans and the Eleatics ; to Anaxagoras for his suggestion of Nous as the universal reality, to Eucleides even more, for combining Nous and the Good. But he did not owe his great debt to any of these. He criticises them all, writes long dialogues to show that their speculations led nowhere ; and in his own positive teachings he passes beyond them into a different region, and there, as he says, stands alone, pointing to a goal at which all his world laughs. Now I do not pretend to know how far any of his predecessors may have followed the same quest in the same spirit. We possess very little of their writings ; we hear of them chiefly through later writers, most of whom were, both mentally and temperamentally, as much out of sympathy with the Platonic Wisdom as are the intellectualists of to-day. Parmenides, Zeno, Eucleides and others *may* have searched as Socrates and Plato did ; but the evidence is all against this. There is only one " philosopher " whose doctrines, both practical and theoretical, appear to have resembled Plato's in spirit and aim as well as in substance ; and that one is Pythagoras. It is noteworthy that Pythagoras is the only great thinker of Greece whom Plato never criticises, but of whom he speaks with the greatest deference and respect, referring to him or his followers for elucidation of difficulties, instancing him as the great example of a teacher whose teaching had in it living truth enough to inspire a band of devoted disciples, and to transform their lives as well as their beliefs. And every one of the doctrines, which we know formed the " gospel " of Pytha-

goras and of the Pythagorean brotherhood at Crotona, was an almost exact reproduction of the cardinal doctrines of the Indian Vidya and the Indian Yoga—so much so that Indian Vedantins to-day do not hesitate to claim Pythagoras as one of themselves, one of their great expounders, whose very name was only the Greek form of the Indian title, Pitta Guru, or Father-teacher.

I am not chiefly anxious to prove or disprove this or that influence. But I boldly make the claim that the Platonic doctrines are not easily understood without reference to the Indian teaching. And, in reference to the quest of Socrates, his character and his faith, I will be content to let the resemblance to the quest and character and faith of the ancient Indian sages speak for itself. I will not attempt—it would need a separate volume—to show how the Indian thought may have filtered through to Socrates and Plato ; how far it may have reached Plato in his wanderings, how far through Pythagoras, how far, even before the death of Socrates, a direct stream of the Eastern doctrine may have flowed through Asia Minor into Greece. But I affirm very confidently that if anyone will make himself familiar with the old Indian wisdom-religion of the Vedas and Upanishads : will shake himself free, for the moment, from the academic attitude and the limiting Western conception of philosophy, and will then read Plato's dialogues, he will hardly fail to realise that both are occupied with the selfsame search, inspired by the same faith, drawn upwards by the same vision. Definite identities of peculiar doctrine are more marked in some dialogues than in others, most of all perhaps in the ontological dialogues such as the Timæus. But the *Republic* is so full an epitome of Plato's positive teaching that I am content to limit my attention to it, as the most characteristic as well as the most familiar of all Plato's works. And in it, the quest of Socrates is more clearly defined than anywhere else : the quest of the Great Reality whose vision changes the world for the enlightened soul even as sunshine changes darkness to light ; so that for him who has seen it—

> " What is midnight gloom
> To unenlightened souls shines wakeful day
> To his clear gaze ; what seems as wakeful day
> Is known for night, thick night of ignorance
> To his true-seeing eyes."

## CHAPTER II

### THE VEDIC INTERPRETATION OF HUMAN LIFE. THE EASTERN ANCESTRY OF PLATO'S DOCTRINE.

THE pathway of the human soul through life may be pictured as containing two distinct segments or arcs, a lower and a higher. To each arc belong different attributes, different duties, different possibilities, different attainments. The lower arc covers the whole life of the citizen—the human "socius," who is conditioned on all sides by the fact that he is a member of a social group, of an industrial community, of a political State. The higher arc contains the path of life for the free soul—super-social, not bound by any ordinary ties of citizen duty or social necessity, but conditioned only by its relation to the supreme reality which is beyond all societies and above all worlds. In the lower arc, the coping stone of a good life is reached when a man learns to do his duty as a good citizen, a good householder, and a good administrator, obeying the law, honouring the accepted gods, living his life with temperance, obedience, prudence and justice. In the upper arc, the pathway begins only when the performance of all duties has already been learned and has become habitual, and the soul is therefore prepared to pass on to the life of single-minded devotion to the Good, of ceaseless performance of duties which are not primarily social, of unwearying pursuit of the wisdom which leads to the knowledge of God. We may call the upper arc the life of religion, if we choose, but not, as will appear, with any implication that the lower is without religion ; and we may call the lower arc the life of the citizen soul in the world, remembering only that the religious soul may be also in the world, though not of it, and may still perform all a citizen's duties, though no longer interested in them in the same way as are the ordinary citizens.

In the lower arc, the conduct of life is motived and guided by

three faculties, which we may call, provisionally, desire, emotion and intelligence. These form the human equipment of the soul which fits it for the attainment of whatever ends a man may set before himself in his passage through the life in the world. Each faculty has its own peculiar characteristic: desire is blind and ignorant, but capable of submission to intelligent control; emotion is passionate and restless, but capable of loyalty to moral law; intelligence has power to direct—for good or for evil—and is capable of prudence. If all three faculties are ordered aright, the soul of the man attains the virtue of dutifulness, and the citizen, at once temperate, steadfast, prudent and just, reaches the highest level of human excellence, the full stature of humanity.

The crowning virtue of dutifulness implies not only the performance of all " due " or right actions, but also the impulse of right motive throughout. In other words, it has an internal as well as an external side, and may be regarded as right attitude and right activity in all social relationships, as well as in relation to the divine ruler of the world.

It is easy to understand the difficulty which arises as soon as the question is asked—What *is* this dutifulness? For the word covers a host of higher and lower forms of right doing and right being, from the simple performance of what custom and law enjoin, up to the realisation of the spirit of righteousness as the source of all our conduct to our neighbours. And the question opens out issues which are plainly social, as well as concerned with the nature of the individual. It is not enough to consider the human soul: the nature of society, and of the social relationships in which alone its virtues and vices become manifest, must be examined too. But the supreme difficulty arises after these obstacles have been surmounted. The righteous man, living the right life in all his social relations, illustrates, after all, only the excellence of the soul on the lower arc; how are we to explain the nature of that righteousness of which this is but a shadow—even as the whole life on the lower path is shadowy and unreal by comparison with the full reality of the higher? This difficulty is increased beyond measure by the fact that, for most of us, our horizon is bounded by the lower arc. Is not our life in it real enough? Its good and evil real enough? Can we better the conception of the just or righteous man whose righteousness and justice take the most valuable and practical form of goodness

in all his doings as father or brother or son, as employer or master or servant, as administrator or soldier or citizen ? It is fantastic, surely, to call such goodness a shadow of reality and a lower form of excellence. Add to such a man the fear and worship of God, and the most real substance of righteousness is obtained. Not so, according to the Vedanta conception. The true life of the soul and the condition of its perfection are not yet reached at all. Only on the upper arc are they to be found, an arc resembling an unseen and unsuspected pathway out of the cave of our present life, to be found only when the soul—even the soul of the " righteous " man—has been converted, and a new sight has been given to it.

And in this upper arc there are also three qualities or faculties, which we may perhaps call by the terms familiar to us, love, faith and wisdom ; and they are the perfect forms of which desire, emotion and intelligence are the earthly copies. Each has its own end, also ; and the end of each is a complete excellence ; for, unlike the three qualities of the lower soul, all these three are equally good, and all alike lead to the final goal. The end or excellence of love is selfless devotion to God ; of faith, the attainment of powers to be used only in the service of the good ; of wisdom, the attainment of the knowledge of God as He is, in or behind all created forms. To each quality or faculty there belongs a different mode of activity : to the first, devotion to God and to every creature without any thought of self or of any reward for self ; to the second, ceaseless activity for others without any care about results (so far as the agent is concerned) ; and to the third, discrimination or right discernment in all things, with no aim except to know good from not-good, God from not-God. And for entrance to the path, in all its three forms, there is one great condition : the soul must first renounce all the desires and interests and attachments of the separate self, and so become free—bound by no law but love, subject to no restraint save that of the chosen path itself. For this reason the life of the upper arc is called the life of renunciation or of detachment, or—best of all—of liberation ; for its righteousness is no longer dutifulness, even of the completest kind ; there is in it no element of restraint, or of conscious subordination of self-will to law ; it implies identity of thought and aim and aspiration with the supreme will.

Even so, the essential distinction which separates the upper from the lower arc—the path of religion, as we may call it, from the path of pursuit of ends in the world—does not become clear unless it is realised that the former brings into play new powers of the soul which are dormant and unused upon the latter. It is no mere difference of degree between the two : they belong to different worlds, and only the soul which is fully prepared and made perfect upon the lower path can awake to the realisation of the existence of the upper. For then, and then only, can the eye of the soul be opened ; then, and then only, can the righteous man come to the use of that supreme faculty whose power is known only to the religious in the sense of seers of God. Science does not recognise it ; psychology has no name for it ; the conduct of affairs in the world furnishes no use for it. Plato had perforce to call it the true Nous, to which no psychological term at all corresponds—least of all the usual translation, reason. We may call it the eye of faith, or the faculty of spiritual discernment —but the terms are still imperfect. The wise men of the East, with their far more complete spiritual psychology, called it, in its highest form, Purusha—pure spirit—or Atman, the divine spark in man. We may adopt whatever name we will, provided only that we keep it always distinct from the names of faculties in use on the lower arc. This is the supremely important thing, if we are to understand the scheme of life which Plato and his teachers held as true. And this is just what is most difficult. Our thought is so little religious, it is concerned so wholly with the path of pursuit that every single term is debased, as it were, by being applied to use on the lower level, and not reserved for its proper use on the higher. Plato found this difficulty too, and accepted it as inevitable ; Nous, sophia, philosophia, are terms which he uses with a peculiar meaning when he leads us on to the upper arc ; but he also uses them in their ordinary meaning to denote reason, knowledge and philosophy, as understood by us on the lower arc. Perhaps we may partly avoid confusion if, in defiance of common usage, we distinguish our terms strictly, in this way: to the lower arc belong intellect, mind and reason, with their results—prudence, knowledge, science, speculation and discovery of facts ; to the higher alone belong Nous and spiritual discernment, with their results : sophia, wisdom, certainty and discernment of reality and truth.

Such, in very meagre outline, is the conception held by Plato of the life open to every soul—a life in which there are two distinct hemispheres or arcs, the one of the world, worldly, the other not of the world, religious; the one possessing only a quasi-reality, the other absolute reality; the one transitory and evanescent, the other permanent and eternal; the one subject to incessant change and fluctuation—from relative evil to relative good, from satisfaction to dissatisfaction, from pleasure to pain, from knowledge to ignorance; the other marred by no such changes, but leading always straight onward towards the perfect light, and marked from beginning to end by the character of the Reality in which is no change nor shadow of turning.

This is the religious conception of life, implicit in all religious teaching. I have tried to present it in the form in which it is given with the greatest completeness—in the religious philosophy of ancient India, commonly known as the Vedanta, or the wisdom of the spirit as revealed in the Vedas. I have chosen this form, rather than that in which the same conception is presented in the Christian religion, for two reasons. First, because Plato was pre-Christian, and could only have been familiar with an earlier form of religion; secondly, because the conception of the upper arc is not now put in the forefront of Christian teaching, and its essential separateness from the lower arc is repudiated by most Christians. We in the West,[1] with our intense absorption in the path of pursuit, in attainments and satisfactions and achievements, in this world and the things of it, are almost content to identify religion with the goodness of the lower path—a religion of morality touched with emotion and linked to occasional worship, which satisfies us because it can be made quite compatible with a life of pursuit of ends, and with a virtuous worldliness. The religion of renunciation and detachment does not appeal to us, any more than it appealed to the Greeks. *They* were too artistic as well as too pleasure-loving to be religious in this sense; *we* are too world-absorbed, too intent upon achieving results, to take as our final rules of conduct the maxims of absolute renunciation contained in the Sermon on the Mount.

But the religion which Christ taught contains beyond a shadow of doubt, and requires for its understanding, the same conception

[1] I am speaking, of course, not of the individual followers of Christ in this or any country, but only of the mass of those who are called Christians.

of the two pathways or arcs, presented, however, in a slightly different form from that found in the Vedanta. And the difference is of some importance in connection with Plato's teaching. It is a difference of emphasis rather than of anything essential. In Christ's revelation, intended primarily for the poor and ignorant and oppressed, the distinguishing qualities of the upper arc appear as faith, hope and love ; and the greatest of these is love. In the revelation of Krishna, contained in the Vedas, the qualities emphasised are those of love, faith and wisdom ; and the greatest of these is wisdom.[1] And this is the emphasis which harmonised with all Plato's attitude, so much so that for him the one predominating quality which marks the soul on the upper path is wisdom, and wisdom alone, not faith or love.

It is necessary now to look a little more closely at this Eastern or Vedantist conception of the soul's life in order to make clear the close parallelism of Plato's exposition. The lower arc which I have described is called definitely the Path of Pursuit, or more fully the Path of Pursuit of ends in the world ; it is also called the path of bondage to the three qualities.

The three dominant faculties or qualities of the soul are called Tamas, Rajas and Sattva.[2] *Tamas* is the desiring element—the whole part of the man which aims at satisfaction of the senses. Its highest end is sense-pleasure ; its constant characteristic is ignorance. It cannot be said to possess any virtue ; but it is capable of submission to control and guidance by the higher faculties, and when this is the case the man is called temperate. *Rajas* denotes emotional energy and passion, together with ambition and the impulse to dominate, succeed, get on in the world. It closely resembles, in one aspect, what we rather barbarously call " pushfulness," but always coupled with excitability and restlessness. But it has also a gentler side—the emotion which, attaching itself to others, becomes affection. Its obvious ends are power and profit. It is not wholly ignorant, but stands midway between Tamas, which can know nothing, and Sattva, which is capable of full understanding. And, at its best, it possesses

[1] This does not mean that the Krishna gospel was out of the reach of the poor and ignorant ; but that the highest and straightest, albeit the hardest, path to salvation is open only to those who have, as Plato puts it, become " fit for philosophy."

[2] It is quite necessary to keep the Sanskrit terms here, and in a few other cases in which any translation would be misleading.

the virtue of tenacious loyalty to the orders given to it by the highest faculty, together with fortitude and courage, and devotion to those for whom it cares.

*Sattva* is more difficult to explain. It denotes not only the faculty of knowing and understanding—intelligence—but also the quality of goodness and stability of character. Regarded as faculty, it alone is competent to guide the whole man aright ; on it depend all the virtues—though temperance and loyal fortitude may be specially connected with the two lower faculties. Its one peculiar virtue is the practical wisdom which the Romans called prudentia ; and its end—the summit of its attainment—is the right performance of all duty. But Sattva has a theoretical as well as a practical side. As intelligence, its function is to reach scientific knowledge of the phenomena of this world ; and by doing so it may be said to *know* and to understand.

These three fundamental qualities of the soul are, as it were, the mental and moral forms of the three great qualities which run through the whole created universe. For it must be noted—and this is characteristic of the extraordinary consistency of the Vedanta doctrine—that every important conception in psychology or ethics or anything else has its counterpart in, or is a form of, a wider conception involved in the explanation of the whole universe and every part of it. Thus we find necessarily that Tamas, Rajas and Sattva have a very profound cosmic significance, which may be explained in this way. The whole of creation—that is the manifested or phenomenal universe—is a compound of the two existences, Spirit and Matter, or rather, absolute reality and absolute unreality. The former is Brahm, the ultimate Being (not to be confused with Brahma, the first manifestation of personal Godhead) ; the latter is Prâkriti ; the former is also called Atma (spirit), the latter also appears as Maya (unreality or illusion or the cause of illusion). Each of them is changeless, though in very different ways ; but the created universe, which is compounded of both, is in a state of incessant change or motion, this being one of the conditions of its manifestation in time. Consequently there exist, in all creation and in every part of it, three elements, corresponding to the changeless Spirit, to the fixed matter, and to the state of perpetual change which results from the combination of the two in a phenomenal world. These three elements are the basis of the three Qualities, which, in thei

cosmic significance, may be called Inertia, Motion and Equilibrium. Tamas or inertia, the lowest quality, corresponds to fixed matter, and is always *bad ;* Sattva or equilibrium, the highest quality, corresponds to unchanging spirit, and is always *good ;* while Rajas or the principle of motion is the intermediate quality, and is partly bad and partly good.

These three cosmic qualities appear in different forms in all the different stages of evolution. The forms which dominate the stage reached in the life of the human soul (the mental and moral life) are (1) the three faculties which we very imperfectly translate by the terms Desire, Emotion and Intelligence ; (2) the moral qualities corresponding to these, namely a condition of real badness, an unstable condition of goodness and badness combined, and a balanced goodness or prudence or steadfastness. The connection between the psychic faculties and their corresponding cosmic qualities is not at first sight quite clear. It may be explained in this way : The lowest faculty, imperfectly translated desire, or better, appetite, corresponds to Inertia, as well as to illusion (the two chief characteristics of matter), because it is totally unprogressive. Its " movements " resemble those of a squirrel in a cage. It can never lead beyond a ceaseless recurrence of wants and satisfactions—of a feeling of emptiness and a temporary filling of the void. It is therefore really a stagnant condition ; but we usually imagine that it is leading us to some end, and therein lies its illusory character. The intermediate faculty (which of course contains a large element of what we call desire) is rather better, because the " aims " of ambition and the feelings of attachment to persons and interests are at any rate progressive in the sense that they lead us on to the attainment of some sort of ends or achievements. They do not merely, as appetite does, involve movement oscillating between two fixed points. They move us in the direction of a changed state of being. The highest faculty, intelligence or prudence, alone leads to a condition which is at once balanced and really progressive ; for it alone can produce a state of " moving equilibrium " (the very antithesis to inertia), and a state of progressive harmony (very different from restless struggling towards some imperfect goal).[1]

It must be remembered, further, that the three Qualities appear also in the constitution and character of society ; and in

[1] See also note at the end of this chapter.

the same form, too, as that in which we find them in the individual soul. That this must necessarily be the case is shown by two reasons: first, because society is a "created thing," or a part of the created universe, and belongs to the same stage of evolution as the human individuals who compose it; secondly, because the individuals import into society their own attributes. Consequently, according to the Vedanta doctrine, we are not making use of an analogy at all, but are simply stating a fact, when we assert that the "soul" of society contains the same three qualities or faculties as the soul of the individual, namely Tamas, Rajas and Sattva. Of course it contains them, and each will appear as the dominant mark of certain of the citizens. For, although all human beings possess the three qualities or faculties in their souls, each quality or faculty is not operative in the same degree in every soul. In some the Tamas element is dominant, in others the Rajas element; and in others again the Sattva element. And this difference of dominance of one quality or another is what really differentiates human beings in respect of moral character; so that the true moral grouping is always under the heads of Tamasic souls, Rajasic souls and Sattvic souls. Moreover, in the present condition of human nature we are bound to admit that by far the greatest number of people in every society belong to the Tamasic group, a smaller number to the Rajasic group, and very few indeed to the Sattvic group. Consequently every society contains a very large class of Tamasic members, a smaller class of Rajasic members, and a very small class indeed of Sattvic members. And the difference between the classes is fundamental and fixed, a fact which is expressed in the Indian doctrine by the assertion that the Manu of human society (its founder and law-giver) divided society into three castes, and ordained that the distinction between them should never be obliterated. The castes are, as the reader doubtless knows, the Vaishyas, the Kshattryas and the Brahmanas. The Vaishyas are the producers and traders of the community, and represent the Tamasic quality. The Kshattryas are the warriors and administrators, and represent the Rajasic quality. The Brahmanas are the priest-rulers, educators and guardians, and of course represent the Sattvic quality.

It may be objected here that there are in India not three but four great castes; and the lowest—that of the Sudras—does not

fit in with this ingenious explanation. Its existence conflicts with the theory of exact correspondence between the social organisation and the psychical structure of the individual, and between both of these and the essential nature of all creation. There ought, apparently, to be four qualities of the soul, not three ; yet the whole Indian psychology and ethic rest upon the assumption of three divisions only.

This difficulty is not hard to explain ; and the explanation has a far-reaching significance. The fourth caste, that of the Sudras, was composed of the lowest and most menial functionaries in society, the slaves or the semi-slaves of the community. Now these were never recognised as an integral part of society in the same way as were the three higher castes. They had no part in the conscious life and management of the State ; they belonged to a lower order altogether. We may say, in fact, that they did not belong at all to the true " soul " of society. And this difference between them and the real citizens is shown clearly enough by the doctrine (always an accepted part of Hindu orthodoxy) that, whereas the members of the three highest castes are all " twice-born," those of the Sudra caste are only " once-born," and must be born again before they can reach the level of the other castes.

Their relation, therefore, to the full or conscious soul of society was exactly analogous to the relation of elementary subconscious processes to the fully conscious processes in the individual soul. The Sudra caste thus corresponds to those automatic processes of the organism which never normally rise above the threshold of consciousness. The continued life of the individual depends upon their healthy functioning ; but they do not form a faculty of the soul, nor any part of the soul which *is* the man. So too the continued life of the ancient State depended upon the due performance of their functions by the Sudras ; yet they formed no part of the combination of castes which constituted the State.

It will thus be seen that there exists, both in the individual and in the society which reflects his qualities, a perfect equipment of faculties requisite to all our needs upon the lower path of life. The Tamas element (reflected in the Vaishya caste) supplies the stimulus needed for all the efforts to gain the satisfaction of our desires ; and, if rightly ordered, gives to us all the material and physical satisfactions we require, in due restraint. The

Rajas element (reflected in the Kshattrya caste) supplies the stimulus needed for all the necessary efforts to excel and succeed, to administer and manage, to increase power and position, to protect and safeguard our well-being—and also to consolidate our social affections and ties. And, if rightly controlled and directed, it gives us social order and individual orderliness, together with the means of living well, in harmony with the given standard and law.

The Sattva element supplies the motive and the means to be virtuous and just and prudent, to know the right and to do it, and also to attain to all necessary scientific knowledge, and to use that knowledge for the good of society and the individual. And the crown of its excellence, in both the individual and society, is known as Dharma, which we may translate provisionally as " the right performance of all duty."

I will not attempt at this point to explain more fully the upper arc or path of life, which I called provisionally the path of religion. The consideration of this belongs to a later division of our enquiry. It will be enough here to state that it is called, in the Vedanta doctrine, the Path of Renunciation and Withdrawal (Nivritti) or the Path of Liberation (Moksha). Its three forms, which I rather boldly paraphrased as Love, Faith and Wisdom, are called Bhakti, Shakti and Mukti—pure devotion or love universal, true power or the ability to do and to bear all things without effort and without questioning, and the discernment of reality which frees the soul from all bondage. And, just as on the lower path the good life has only one supreme reward—the consciousness of duty done, or the realisation of Dharma, to which all acquisition of pleasure and of profit is subsidiary ; so the upper path has for its one final goal the full spiritual realisation or higher Dharma which belongs only to the soul which *knows* God.

It must be noted, however, that, whereas the psychological analysis and description necessary to make clear the characteristics of the Path of Pursuit of ends in the world are elaborated with great exactness, this is not the case in connection with the Path of Liberation. There are many reasons for this. In the first place, this upper Path is something altogether transcendent. It belongs to another world, the world of true reality, to which all our ordinary conceptions, thoughts and doctrines are inapplic-

able. For they are related only to the phenomenal world in which we now live. Consequently, though we may say that there are different modes of activity on the upper Path, we cannot speak of difference of faculty or of quality, whether psychological or ethical. Indeed, all the categories of every science are superseded. For in the world of absolute reality the three fundamental " qualities " no longer exist : they belong to all created and changing objects, but not to the eternal and spiritual. And every soul which has really entered that path is said to have " passed beyond the Qualities."

Again, for the human soul the one important thing is to know what the pathway is, and to have the will to find the gateway to it, and to prepare itself to tread the path when found and entered. This preparation is quite enough to occupy the life of most of us many times over ; and for it, an understanding of the laws and conditions of the lower path is the sole requisite.

Further, although the upper path will not be the same for all, but may take different forms with different modes of activity, all the forms are equally perfect, and all the modes of activity lead alike to the perfect good. We shall not lose anything because we may chance to be ignorant of the details of each form. Moreover, on the upper arc the special pathway which is the right one for us is always so straight and clear to the eye of the converted soul that there is no fear of our losing the way for lack of a chart. For these and other reasons the great teachers of humanity seldom have very much to tell us about the details of the soul's life and work on the upper arc : why should they, when it is so certain that illumination will come direct from the source of all light to every soul whose eye has been turned round from the shadows of the cave of desire ?

But they are never weary of explaining, in the clearest way, the essential difference between the two paths—and in that way explaining the conditions which the soul must fulfil before it can enter the higher one. For on this higher path the soul must be *free*—that is, bound down by no desires, hampered by no care about results, burdened by no camel's hump of worldly ties, disturbed by no interest in any consequences which may affect its self. Indeed, on this path there *is* no self—in the sense of an ego which seeks its own ends. The entrance cannot be found until the soul has lost its selfhood. The lower path is the path

of *self*-development in all its forms, of self-culture, of the realisation of any and all emotional, æsthetic, or scientific ends, and of any or all interests in results. But on the Path of Religion, none of these is possible or necessary, for there is no self left to satisfy or to reward. We must literally lose our self to find our soul. "When does a man find salvation?" asks an Eastern disciple of his teacher. "When his egoism dies," is the answer.

No less clearly defined is the fundamental difference between the two paths with regard to reality and unreality, and the soul's recognition of each. On the lower path, nothing is real: all our experience is made up of pairs of opposites—pleasure and pain, success and failure, joy and grief, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, faith and doubt—always alternating, never remaining fixed or permanent, only real in so far as we for the moment think them so. All our knowledge too is of changing forms, even our knowledge of the laws of nature or of the laws of social conduct. On this path there is always the one answer to the insistent question—"Is this at last reality?" And the answer is—"Neti, Neti." "Not this, not this; not any 'this' which the *mind* of man discovers." But on the upper path all is real, and all is apprehended by the pure spirit of which mind is but an earthly shadow and soul itself only the enduring sheath or vehicle.

And yet, just as we may not say that the life of the lower path is non-religious, so we may not say that it is unreal or illusory. We can only say that the upper path alone is the life of true reality, that it alone is wholly real. So too the life of pursuit is not to be called selfish; but the religious life alone is selfless; the former is not bad, but only in the latter is the true good to be found. For on the path of pursuit there are reflected, as it were, all the forms of good which have their reality on the path of liberation; and all these forms of good have a relative reality on the lower path.

Turning now to Plato's *Republic*, we find a very remarkable parallelism to all this, not only in the thought, but in the words used to express the thought. His conceptions, arguments and conclusions are in most cases identical with those of the Hindu scriptures; the language in which he clothes them is often extraordinarily similar; several of his metaphors are repetitions of metaphors found in the older writings; and the psychological and ethical terms to which he gives a semi-technical use might

serve excellently as translations of the corresponding technical terms in the Sanskrit. We will note the similarities in detail in later chapters; but we may indicate here the most obvious parallels.

In the picture of the "righteous" soul and the "righteous" State which corresponds to it, described in the first part of the *Republic*, Plato is presenting the lower path at its best. All the essential characteristics are there, in their due order. The three great "Qualities" of the Vedanta doctrine appear as the three qualities or elements which both constitute and explain the nature of the soul and of the State. Tamas, Rajas and Sattva (in their psychological and ethical aspects) have their exact equivalents in the Epithumia, Thumos and Logistikon[1] which figure so largely in the *Republic*; and the characteristic functions and virtues in each case are identical. Epithumia, like Tamas, represents blind desire with its character of complete ignorance and no virtue at all except the capacity of quiet submission to control; Thumos, the passionate and ambitious element, stands, like Rajas, midway between ignorance and knowledge, and is capable of the virtue of fortitude and obedience to reason; the Logistikon, or the rational element, is the Sattvic quality or faculty to which belongs not only the special virtue of prudence but also the power to harmonise the whole soul or State into the condition of Dikaiosune or righteousness.

Again, just as the Manu of ancient India instituted the caste system upon the basis of the three principles in the individual

[1] These three Greek terms, as used by Plato, are almost as untranslatable as the Sanskrit terms. Epithumia means desire—but by no means all desire. It is confined to the Tamasic appetites, which are chiefly desires for sense-pleasures. Thumos means passion or anger: it is sometimes translated "the spirited element," but this involves a dangerous confusion with the word "spirit" in its true sense of "the spiritual faculty or element." Logistikon means the reasoning element. Perhaps the nearest English equivalents are Greed, Emotion and Reason; but it is sometimes quite necessary to use the Greek terms, especially in the case of Thumos.

It must be carefully borne in mind that the three faculties or elements do not exhaust the nature of the soul in the full sense, but only that of the lower or normal human soul—that is, the psychical equipment which everyone possesses and uses in ordinary life. Two higher faculties are subsequently described by Plato; and his complete psychology is explained later.

I must also point out that the three Sanskrit terms denote the conditions characteristic of the three faculties, rather than the faculties themselves. But to Tamas belongs the desire or greed which is both blind and blinding—Kama; to Rajas belong anger or passion, ambition, and all the most "pushing" emotions; to Sattva belongs the reasoning faculty.

soul, so Plato divides his State into three classes, representing the three psychical elements. The lowest class of producers and traders, corresponding to the Vaishya caste, reflects the element of ignorant desire—Epithumia. The class next above this, the Auxiliaries, corresponding to the Kshattrya caste, reflects the passionate element—Thumos. The highest class, the Guardians, corresponding to the Brahmana caste, represents the principle of prudent reason—To Logistikon.

The parallelism is of course repeated in the whole account of the transition from the lower to the higher arc, contained in the central books of the *Republic*. Plato's conversion of the soul is identical with the Vairagya of the Vedas; the wonderful allegory of the Cave, and the escape from it of the free soul, or the true Nous, is only an expansion of one of the favourite allegories of the Vedic writings; the description of the real world, with its light from the sunshine of the Good, is, in the main, the Eastern description; the contrast between ordinary knowledge and true wisdom is exactly the fundamental Vedanta contrast between Vidya in the sense of knowledge of the phenomenal universe and Adyatmavidya, or direct perception of the spiritual universe; the super-philosophy of Plato is the Gnana of Vedanta; his Nous is the Atma or Samvit—the spiritual consciousness—of the Vedic doctrine.

There is no need to dwell upon the similarity of Plato's ontology, with its account of reality, quasi-reality and unreality, to the ontology of the Hindu philosophy. This is generally admitted, as is also the fact that his theory of reincarnation had an Eastern origin. Equally obvious is the identity of his doctrine of Anamnesis or Recollection with the doctrine of the origin of all true knowledge proclaimed by Vedantins. And the correlative theory of Eternal Ideas—Plato's greatest contribution to Western metaphysics—has an astonishingly close counterpart in the Vedanta doctrine. But these and other similarities are more marked in other dialogues. My business here is with the *Republic*, and with its peculiar meaning as a *religious* philosophy.

And, in connection with this, perhaps the most striking parallelism to the Vedanta teaching meets us, not in the close and obvious similarities of the conceptions and terms already noticed, but in some less obvious resemblances. Most of all in the explanations of the central difficulties and so-called paradoxes

which the *Republic* contains will the parallelism appear. One example of this must be noted here. Nothing is more baffling to our common sense and understanding than the way in which Plato draws for us, with the most exquisite detail, the picture of the perfectly good man in the perfectly good State, and then, as it were, throws the canvas aside with the assertion that this is *not* Righteousness, this is *not* reality. Another picture must needs be drawn, surpassing altogether this perfect human form of the wise and good; and this other picture is—what? A philosopher, of all things, fantastically painted in colours which do not appeal to us in the least; an impossible, useless, grotesque person who has not even the virtue of interesting us.

But is not this exactly the paradox of Sattva, the highest of the three qualities, connoting so perfect an excellence that it is even sometimes called "the very lustre of goodness," with its supreme virtue of Dharma, the full fruition of dutifulness—yet always discarded, always superseded by something intangible, unattractive, cold, unearthly, which we are called upon to hail as the *real* goodness? The central paradox of the *Republic* becomes clear only if we bear in mind the fundamental distinction between the two paths, and remember that the Dikaiosune or Righteousness which Plato is trying to explain is really the Dharma of the Indian philosophy, which appears as the crown and glory of *each* path, but with a very different meaning in each case.

I have hitherto given as an English equivalent for this word the phrase "duty and the right performance of duty"; but this is a very partial translation. The word is really untranslatable, for it has many distinct though connected meanings, each of which requires a different English equivalent. Primarily it denotes the complete stage of the development of anything—its full evolution, the law of its being and the fulfilment of that law. Thus the Dharma of fire is to burn and give heat; the Dharma of a plant is to produce flowers and fruit. Secondly, it means the complete function of anything, or, in the moral sense, its whole duty and the performance of that duty. These meanings give the further signification of excellence or virtue or even perfection; and, in relation to human life, the word carries in addition the meanings of morality and goodness. When we speak of the Dharma of the soul on the lower path, we mean the perfect condition of all the three qualities or faculties of the soul working

together harmoniously to perform all the duties required of the good man. But there is also a Dharma of the purified soul on the upper path ; and as this also means its perfect condition, and the attainment of the highest state which the spirit of man can reach, we must needs regard it as transcending altogether the excellence attainable on the lower path. If the goal of the spirit is union with God, then that is its Dharma on the upper path, a condition in which virtue and goodness as we ordinarily understand the terms are superseded. Finally, the word also means Religion, both in the limited sense in which most of us use the term, and in the full sense suggested in the last sentence. In fact the words Dharma and Religion are, in literal meaning, very nearly identical—but not quite ; and the difference is significant of part of the difference between the Eastern and the Western conceptions of religion. For the word Dharma means " that which holds the soul to God " ; while the word religion means " that which binds *back* " to God the soul which has wandered away.[1]

Now this is the word to which the Greek term Dikaiosune, *as used by Plato in the Republic,* is very nearly equivalent. It is therefore clear, I think, why I suggest as our English rendering, not Justice, with its rather narrow social or even political implications, but Righteousness, which may at any rate be both social and super-social. And the central paradox of the *Republic* is at least partly intelligible when we remember that each arc of life has its own Dharma or Dikaiosune or Righteousness, that of the lower, human and social, that of the higher, spiritual and super-social ; that of the lower, the goodness of the human soul among men, that of the higher, the perfection of the purified spirit in the presence of God. In each case it is the virtue of each faculty doing its proper work well, doing the right thing rightly—the law of its right activity. But the faculties which function on the lower path are those of the natural man ; whereas the faculties which function on the upper path are those of the spiritual man. And *that* is why, at the very summit of the lower

[1] A further difference is also significant. Dharma (from the root dhree) meaning " that which holds fast " to God, implies an internal tie. Religion (from the root ligare) meaning " that which binds back " to God, implies an external bond. And this difference is characteristic certainly of the difference between the Indian and the Roman conceptions ; possibly also of the difference between the Indian and our own.

path its Law of Righteousness is cast aside, to be superseded by the law of perfect love and faith and wisdom, by the freedom in which all social ties and interests melt away in the fire of selfless devotion to the Sun of Righteousness. That is why, when the perfect social life and the perfect individual life have been described—on the lower path—the kingly soul awakes and discovers that they are but a cave of shadows, a life of relative reality. A part of the soul that is neither desire nor emotion nor intellect, but *Nous*, the faculty of knowing reality, awakes from its long sleep, and soars upward to the real world. The upper arc is reached by the conversion which gives new sight. And not knowledge now, but *wisdom* is found, the wisdom which means God-knowledge. The shadows of the puppets of the world-life pass away ; the eternal spirit of the man, set free and purified by the discipline of earth, goes forth to find the great Eternal Spirit of all worlds.

Perhaps it is now clear why I urge that we cannot read the *Republic* aright if we regard it simply as a very brilliant combination of social, moral and metaphysical speculations. For in that case we limit ourselves to an interpretation related only to our activities and thoughts on the lower path ; and much of the teaching of the book is then unintelligible, often perverse, and occasionally almost ridiculous. For when we speak of morality, we think almost wholly of *social* excellences—of rightness of action and attitude and feeling towards our neighbours. But in Plato's conception that is only the beginning of righteousness, though a very necessary beginning : its real essence is super-social and super-moral, something which lies beyond the scope of all ethical theory and system. Again, when we think of social life, we think of it, not perhaps as the only life worth considering, but as the only one whose conditions and conduct seriously concern us here and now, and as the only one whose activities can be dealt with scientifically and philosophically. But Plato posits the existence of another life open to us, if we will, not after our death, but while we are still on earth and members of an earthly society. And *its* conditions and laws are the true and only subject-matter of the highest " science " and the deepest philosophy. Finally, when we think of metaphysics, of ontology, of speculations about reality and the knowledge of reality, our attention is normally concentrated upon the powers of mind and

intellect in relation to a universe only apprehended through the medium of the sense impressions upon the foundation of which the mental faculties build up an ideal system. But Plato means by philosophy something totally different. It begins only when a faculty which is not mind or intellect cognises a reality which is not that of the perceived universe at all, but of a super-world which may indeed be called ideal—provided we mean by the word that which is transcendently real.

In other words, our ethics, our social or political philosophy and our metaphysics, are all concerned with the activities of faculties whose province it is to function on the lower path ; while Plato's deepest teaching is expressly aimed at carrying us beyond that path, and pointing out the existence of a higher one. The antithesis is that of human, worldly and mental, on the one hand, and superhuman, other-worldly, and spiritual, on the other hand. And the latter *cannot* be interpreted in the light of the former. And if this is so, then one is bound to urge that much of the usual interpretation and criticism of the *Republic* is quite beside the point ; grotesquely so, one is tempted to add, when one finds the moral teaching of the book gravely hailed as a defence of Utilitarianism, and the spiritual teaching explained as a rather faulty form of conceptualism ![1]

Let me, however, guard here against a probable misunderstanding. I do not in the least desire to claim that all Plato's writings must be interpreted from a transcendental standpoint, and are out of reach of ordinary rationalist criticism. I see no reason whatever why—to take one example—the arguments of the Protagoras should not be regarded in exactly the same light as the arguments of Mill's Utilitarianism. My sole contention is that his works as a whole have behind them a background of faith and a motive of search which do *not* belong to any intellectualist philosophy ; and that this faith and this motive (I call them boldly a religious faith and a religious motive) alone explain the full significance of his writings. This is what I mean when I say that his metaphysics, his ethics, his politics and his science are fundamentally different from ours. With us, these are all departments of enquiry, interdependent indeed, but forming a whole to which alone they are relative, and which is itself independent and complete—this whole being the rational,

[1] As by Grote and D. G. Ritchie, respectively.

intellectual knowledge of the world we live in. But with Plato, all these departments, and also the whole to which they belong, are merely the media through which and in which he is obliged to begin his search. But the end sought is outside and beyond them all: outside and beyond the rational or intellectual knowledge of the phenomenal world altogether. It is the relation to this end which gives their true significance to his discussions in each department of rational enquiry, even in such a department as that of etymology. For the derivation of words (as dealt with in the Cratylus) interests him, not as etymology, but simply because he sees in it a connection with the doctrine of Reality, Quasi-reality and Unreality which forms part of his transcendental philosophy. If many of his etymological theories are, in the philologist's view, grotesque and impossible, that is of very little consequence. They serve very well to illustrate and explain the doctrine behind them. They are no more grotesque and impossible than some of his political theories, which, judged as politics, are of very doubtful value, but, judged as expressions in the political or social medium of his fundamental doctrines, are much more profound than any political philosophy.

For this reason we must expect to find, as we undoubtedly do find, serious inconsistencies in Plato's treatment of the different departments of our knowledge. But there is a much greater difficulty than this. There are inconsistencies also in the presentation, through these media, of the deeper doctrine itself. The theory of eternal Ideas appears in a different form in almost every dialogue in which it is discussed; the arguments in proof of the soul's immortality are never twice the same, and are sometimes contradictory; the soul described in the Phaedo appears to be very different from the soul described in the Timaeus; very varying accounts are given of the constitution of the universe, of its rotatory movement, even of the extent to which it is or is not guided by Providence. These, and many other inconsistencies like them, are a much more serious matter: do they not negative the assumption of a single firm faith and a single sure motive running through the Platonic works? I think not in the least, and for this reason. Plato, like his master, made no claim to have seen the full vision of truth. Like Socrates, he knew where alone it could be found, and how; knew, too, some of the essentials of the Reality which it would reveal. His faith in the

ultimate success of his quest never wavered; his belief in the rightness of his conceptions never changed. But he was still groping in partial darkness, seeing only the reflections and shadows of the Real Good which he describes in the *Republic*. His attempts, therefore, to envisage the truth which he dimly saw could hardly fail to produce inconsistencies in his exposition; but these inconsistencies are no evidence against the consistency of his faith. Indeed, it would be strange if there were no contradictions. When once a man has found the "gospel" which he knows, by an inner conviction, must be for him the final interpreter of the riddle of existence, the one guide to light through the dark mazes of changing opinion and doubt, the one firm bulwark against temptation and disappointment and disillusionment, he is bound, if there is anything of the teacher in him, to put it before others in a hundred different forms, with changing emphasis as his own growth brings changed sense of need, with new applications as his own contact with life grows wider. There is only one kind of consistency which we have a right to demand: that all his teachings shall show the same strong set of the current of his thoughts towards a single goal of truth. We cannot say when Plato found the faith which afterwards inspired his writings: part, no doubt, he owed to Socrates, and part—for Socrates died when his disciple was only twenty-nine—in his wanderings after his master's death, possibly from the followers of Pythagoras. But once found, it became for him the basis of everything, and his life-long aim was to read the lesson of it into all our thought about life and destiny.

We are apt to say, as we take up one after another of his writings, that he is applying the genius of his intellect to the construction, now of a system of ethics, now of a system of metaphysics; that he is elaborating here a political philosophy, there a beginning of psychology; and so on. But I think this misses the point. It makes him just a brilliant speculator and thinker at a time when philosophical speculation and thought were rather crude and immature; and on that level we misjudge him by applying the standards of our undoubtedly fuller and maturer philosophies. I prefer a different attitude, which may be expressed thus: Here is a man who has discovered what he believes to be the inmost significance of life and reality, and would fain reveal it to others. He lives in an age in which there is much

speculation, with very little depth ; much criticism and questioning, with very little knowledge ; many beginnings of philosophies, but hardly any science. All that is of no consequence—except that it makes more difficult the task of explanation. For his discovery is not a matter of speculation or of science or of philosophy, but a matter of certainty far transcending that of ordinary knowledge ; and it gives the key to every riddle of existence as no philosophy or science ever has done or ever can do. But it must be explained in the language of current thought and the imagery of common experience ; it must be explained, too, in reference to every department of our activities and interests. *Therefore* he must needs write as a philosopher, and most of all as a moral philosopher ; since the moral application of his faith is the most obvious and the most important. Often, too, as a political philosopher ; since the application to the citizen life is hardly less vital. He thus appears to us as a speculator like other speculators, in ethics, politics, metaphysics ; but he is *not* speculating at all. He is trying to illumine our thoughts by the light of the super-knowledge which he has found, or believes he has found. He is not to be judged by the criteria of greater or less plausibility which are all that we speculators can appeal to.

I own to one difficulty here. It is generally assumed that Plato was a keen political theoriser and, in a sense, a keen politician. How little the *Republic* justifies this view I have tried to show in this book. But there are also the Politicus and the Laws to be reckoned with. The latter especially seems to justify the assumption referred to. The political interest is dominant in it. It is a definite attempt to establish, in principle and in detail, the necessary constitution of a satisfactory State. I admit the difficulty. Perhaps I can best meet it by making clear, once for all, Plato's conception. In his view, the " best condition of living " is essentially the same for the individual soul and for a society of souls ; and this condition may be expressed by the phrase " the guidance of inspired wisdom, together with perfect freedom and an absence of any laws." This best condition of living is revealed by a true analysis of the nature of the individual soul and of its relations to reality. It is a condition which is at all times possible for the individual soul, even now, hindered as it is by the environment of an unruly body and a dangerous world. (This is the teaching of the *Republic*.) It is a condition

which may once have been possible for human society, perhaps in the Saturnian age ; but it is *not* possible for society to-day, for the world is now in the dark age of its evolution, and society could not be sufficiently purified without far too drastic measures. (Politicus.) But the constitution of society, now or at any time, can only be satisfactory in proportion as it approximates to the " divine pattern " ; therefore it is very important that legislators should have a " second-best constitution " elaborated for them as a present possibility, conforming as nearly as may be to the perfect model. (Laws.) And the purpose of the Laws is to describe such a " second-best constitution." But the object of the *Republic* is boldly to proclaim the absolute best or perfect condition, and to do so for the help of the individual soul, deducing it step by step from the analysis of the nature and functions of that individual soul.

It is therefore not difficult to explain both the nature and the extent of Plato's " political " interest—let us rather say his social interest, since what we call politics was, in his view, very far removed from that care for the good of society which he felt and felt so strongly. He lived with his eyes fixed upon an impossibly exalted pattern of " the good life," and he knew it to be impossible for the world as it is. But he will not believe that a fairly close copy of it is impossible, for humanity as a social whole. The ideal—the realisation of absolute good—is everything to him, his only touchstone of worth. He cannot help, therefore, trying to carry its conditions into all the most important departments of human life—education, art, and even government and social polity. The conditions will not work in the world as we know it ; so much the worse for the world. There is no other " good " ; it is this or nothing : what the world pursues is a false good. But at least the world shall know what is its real good : some day, somewhere, some society may be wise enough to follow it. Hence it is that his political attitude is, like that of so many mystics, perverse and unreasonable in our eyes. At one time he seems to us to be hopelessly reactionary, for ever harking back to a mythical age in which the children of the world lived, like veritable children, in complete submission to divinely wise guides. What we call the progress of mankind he regards as retrogression, rejecting the idea of progress, refusing any such title to the upward march of civilisation. At another

time we call the attitude absurdly ideal, for he seems to be looking on into an age of spiritual perfection, in which all cultured complexity shall have been purified away, and human society shall consist of passionless men and women shepherded through a very dull life for their spiritual good by a small group of ultra-purified philosophers. But, however perverse the attitude may seem to be, it is the attitude of a man who believes intensely in his vision—so much so that no other " politics," no other or more intelligible schemes of social improvement, interest him in the least. With his eyes on the vision, and on the ideal it reveals, he tells us first that this and no other is the good life for the individual soul. Then, thinking of society and its ills, he tells us again—still looking to the ideal—that this and no other is the good life for society. He shows us the path of wisdom, in all its fulness, for the individual soul to follow ; he does his best for society by holding out to it the conditions of that path, modified just so far as he dares to modify the absolute good. Caring for both the individual and society, he " legislates " for both ; but his interest is not in the laws, but in the goal which is his vision.

And therefore, in spite of the elaborateness and length of his treatise, the Laws ; in spite of the fact that it was probably his latest work ; in spite of the serious dogmatism which almost justifies the opinion that Plato's ideal was " that of a despotic law-giver and man-trainer, wielding the compelling force of the secular arm for what he believes to be spiritual improvement " ;[1] in spite of all this, we may none the less feel confident in our interpretation of Plato if, with Dikaearchus, we regard him as a compound of Socrates and Pythagoras, rather than if, with Plutarch, we regard him as a compound of Socrates and Lycurgus.

*Note on the three " Qualities," and their relation to Plato's psychology.*

I have said that Sattva, the highest quality, corresponds to cosmic equilibrium. But it implies much more than equilibrium. It may be correctly defined as " the essence which brings about the manifestation of a phenomenon, and keeps that phenomenon stable." It is thus directly connected with the spiritual reality behind all phenomena. It must not, however, be regarded as a quality of pure spirit—which has no " qualities "—but as a quality of *nature,* running universally through all creation, and itself due to the omnipresent background of spirit. Hence the complex meaning of Sattva : it is, as it were, the

[1] Grote.

reflected form of pure spiritual reality, the nearest approach to spirit which can appear in a " mixed " universe. Therefore it is harmony and the giver of harmony, it is goodness and the cause of goodness, it is knowledge and the faculty of knowledge. But it belongs—as the three " Qualities " necessarily must belong—only to the created world of phenomena. It does *not* belong to the higher world of the Real or spiritual, in which Sattva—both as harmony and as goodness and as knowledge, and as the principle or faculty of each—is transcended.

Plato, concerned chiefly with the mental or psychical aspects of the three Qualities, uses the word Logistikon (the reasonable element) to denote the Sattvic faculty. This he very carefully distinguishes from Nous, the spiritual faculty; but it connotes the highest excellence in the " mixed " world in which we live, and appears as the faculty of goodness, knowledge and harmony in that world.

The three Qualities, in their psychical form, are of course all related to desire; for the word " desire " covers every conceivable conation into which consciousness enters, from the desire for food on the part of a hungry child to the desire for holiness on the part of the saint. The relation in the case of Sattva is simple: it implies " right " desire, which may best be expressed as desire for goodness and for truth; and it is always as nearly disinterested as any desire can be. It would, however, be wrong to assume from this that the Sattvic condition has no pleasures except those which are the satisfactions of " right " desire. This is an assumption often made, and then used as a confirmation of the belief that the condition of thorough goodness is a remarkably dull and unattractive one. (Even Adeimantus makes this objection in a later book.) But it must be remembered that all the *pure* pleasures, as Plato calls them in the Philebus, belong to Sattva; that is, those pleasures which may be very intense, but are not preceded by desire, and therefore are not preceded or followed by any feeling of void. (See the account of pleasure given in Book IX.) I confess that Plato's examples of " pure " pleasures are a little depressing. He instances the pleasure of looking at a single pure colour or a perfect geometrical figure!

The relation to desire of the two lower qualities—Rajas or Thumos and Tamas or Epithumia—is not so clear. Both imply desire for certain kinds of definite satisfaction; but the objects of Tamasic desire always recur again and again in the same form, while the objects of Rajasic desire do *not* repeat themselves in the same form. And this constant return to the same point is, I think, the mark which best distinguishes the Tamasic desires from the Rajasic. The latter are always something more than recurrent oscillations of motive and effort. Their " end " is always definable as a unique object, or as a state of satisfaction which, when once attained, cannot be repeated.

The " ends " of Tamasic desire, on the other hand, may indeed be classified into genera and species, but they cannot be individualised; and the aim of each desire is to repeat the same satisfaction continually. Thus a drunkard wants drink—constantly; or he wants some specific

drink—repeatedly. A hungry man wants food—as often as he is hungry. A lustful man wants satisfaction of his lust—again and again. It is true that imagination adds trimming to these Tamasic desires, and so causes their objects to appear unique. Even a drunkard may long for a particular imagined satisfaction, just as when we are hungry we may long for a particular Gargantuan feast which we elaborate in exact detail in our thought. But the true character of all these desires is the recurrence or repetition of sameness of want and of satisfaction : and every satisfaction tends to be the prelude to the same want over again.

Not so the Rajasic desires. A man desires to found a family or to win the Derby or to be Prime Minister or to become a millionaire. In some cases he may *appear* to repeat the want after obtaining satisfaction. But this is not really so. A man who has " made his pile " may still desire money : but it is a new end : he first desired to be a millionaire, and now desires to be a multi-millionaire. So in other cases. The end may not be as satisfying as we hoped : we therefore compose a new end in which all the elements are doubled or trebled. I suppose a man who desires to win the Derby a second time does not want to repeat the same gratification but to gain a new one. And in most cases the object of the desire is plainly final : once attained, it is followed by desire for new objects, for fresh fields to conquer, not a repetition of old ones.

Herein, I think, lies the essential difference between Tamas and Rajas by which the relative superiority of the Rajasic desires is clearly shown. It is sometimes urged that the difference may be expressed by saying that Epithumia or Tamas stands for those elementary desires (natural appetites, as Plato calls them in the fourth book) which pay no attention to other people ; that Thumos or Rajas denotes desires which are rather more social or other-regarding, at least in so far as they involve conscious competition with others ; while Logistikon or Sattva always implies desire for co-operation. But these differences are not the essential ones : they are not the differences emphasised in the Indian philosophy, nor are they emphasised by Plato. They only happen to fit in with the usual " social and political " interpretation of the *Republic*, by which they are also suggested. It is true, of course, that the Tamasic desires are usually more limited in their social interactions than are the Rajasic desires ; but this is an accident. My desire for drink or for sensual gratification may or may not involve competition or co-operation with others : my desire for power or profit (the two typical forms of the objects of Rajas) certainly must do so. But both kinds of desire may be equally self-centred and self-regarding ; and the Rajasic desires (especially in the form of desire for money) are sometimes actually more anti-social than most of the Tamasic appetites. The difference between them which really is important in the Platonic or Vedanta doctrine is the difference which affects the spiritual progress of the individual man or woman ; and that difference can only be expressed, as I have tried to explain, by

reference to the deeper meaning of Tamas and Rajas. The Tamasic desires, if they rule the soul, are utterly and hopelessly unprogressive—moving in a stationary circle which means stagnation or death ; the Rajasic desires always move the soul on from one object to another ; and even if all the objects are illusory, still the movement is not circular, and *may* lead to movement in a really progressive direction.

The further difference, resulting from the less or greater degree in which conscious purpose enters into the desire, is of course obvious. This is expressed by the relation of the two lower faculties to the highest : Rajas or Thumos is nearer to Sattva or Logistikon than is Tamas or Epithumia. This difference is important when the qualities are considered as the marks of social grades : a Tamasic class or group is generally on a much lower level in regard to conscious reflective purpose than a Rajasic class or group. Plato, not being chiefly interested in the social aspect of the matter, does not make much of this distinction, though he indicates it clearly enough. The copper or iron class is incapable of possessing any real virtue, and is not worth educating.

# PART II

# THE PREPARATION OF THE SOUL, AND AN ACCOUNT OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LOWER PATH. *REPUBLIC*, BOOKS I TO IV

## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSIS OF THE *REPUBLIC*, BOOK I AND PART OF BOOK II. THE EXPLANATION OF THE QUESTION "WHAT IS THE NATURE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ?"; AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE GOOD STATE.

THE *Republic* consists of three fairly distinct parts. The first, comprising the first four books, is intended to explain the nature of right and wrong, of righteousness and unrighteousness, of good and evil, of excellence and the reverse of excellence, in the human soul living the life of a citizen in the world. The second part, comprising Books V to VII, is intended to indicate the nature of a righteousness or goodness or excellence of a higher order altogether, attained only by the purified spirit of man, or the human soul made perfect and set free from all worldliness. The third part, comprising the last three books, explains the chief dangers which beset the imperfect soul in its passage through this and other lives. In the present chapter and the two succeeding ones I attempt to give a summary and an explanation of the first part.

The *Republic* is written, like most of Plato's works, in the form of a dialogue between Socrates and others ; but the greater portion of it is a continuous exposition by Socrates, with words of agreement appropriately inserted at intervals by one or other of his auditors. In the first book, however, and part of the second, the other speakers are of real importance, and the dialogue form is quite appropriate. This early section is probably felt to be a

very irritating introduction to the work. Much of the first book seems to be mere quibbling; all of it is baffling to one who is reading the *Republic* for the first time; and none of it establishes any conclusion in a satisfactory way. Yet it is by no means unimportant, though its importance is rather negative than positive. It serves the necessary purpose of clearing the ground of several misconceptions, and at the same time gives some valuable indications of the positive arguments which are to follow. Its very inconclusiveness also is perhaps intentionally exaggerated in order to show the impotence of argumentative reason as an instrument in the search for final truth.

The first character introduced in the dialogue is Cephalus, a worthy and pleasant old gentleman, who discourses for a short time to Socrates upon the subject of old age and wealth. Cephalus is brought upon the scene as an example of those who are in the quite uncritical and unreflective stage of morality and religion. Socrates is far too kindly and too wise to disturb his faith by any cross-questioning, though the old man professes a keen interest in philosophical discussion—and characteristically withdraws the moment a philosophical discussion is proposed. But not before he has indicated very clearly the limitations of the stage which he represents by propounding two or three queer maxims of worldly wisdom, supported by sundry quotations of better-known people's opinions, and at least one Biblical text. He explains that he does not find old age irksome, as most do, but rather reposeful, because, with the decay of the physical powers, one is delivered from the tyranny of many furious masters of desire and lust. But it has not yet occurred to him that to outgrow a lust without conquering it is merely to gain repose without earning it, and puts off the battle of self-mastery to be fought out in some other life. It has not occurred to him that a virtuousness acquired by the mere process of growing old is not a more valuable moral acquisition than baldness. With the same complacency he explains that wealth is useful because it enables us to pay our debts and placate our creditors both among men and among the gods, and so die easily and with a clear conscience. But it has not occurred to him that the freedom from remorse which can be obtained by the use of the purse is not more valuable in the after-life than a handsome coffin or an extra-sized funeral pyre. And yet Cephalus is a good man, and a religious man, too, in the

sense which is applicable to the habitual and almost unconscious stage of morality and religion. His life is filled with the services and observances of religion. He comes in to greet Socrates fresh from the performance of a sacrifice ; and he returns to his sacrifices again when the subject of righteousness is proposed for discussion.

After his withdrawal, the theme of the *Republic* is introduced in its simplest form by the question—What do we mean when we speak of performing right and just actions ? What *is* right conduct ? Socrates obtains his first answer from Polemarchus, the son of Cephalus, who also represents a distinct type of mental and moral development. An excellent and worthy young man, he is quite content to settle the great issues of religion and ethics by appeal to the scriptures. The dictum of one of the inspired writers is final, for him ; though probably he has never analysed nor understood the texts which are his sheet-anchor of faith. Critical analysis of them evidently startles and bewilders him. Yet he is willing to learn, and, although quickly reduced to silence by the Socratic method of cross-questioning, becomes an attentive and sympathetic listener throughout the rest of the discussion. He has no difficulty in bringing from his armoury of scriptural texts an appropriate one wherewith to answer the first question asked by Socrates. " Right conduct, we are told, is to render to every one his due. That is what the revered Simonides has laid down." Socrates promptly turns this text inside out, or rather shows that what Polemarchus understands by it cannot possibly be true, and is unworthy of so inspired a person as Simonides. For what is due to our friends and to our enemies is not the same thing—so at least Polemarchus maintains. To the one we owe all that is helpful, to the other all that is harmful. So right conduct both helps and harms, does good and does evil—as if it could ever be the function of Right to injure people and make them worse than they are !

The next answer to the question is made by the representative of a very different type of mind. Both the answer and the arguments in support of it are put into the mouth of one of the professional teachers of " the citizen art " in Greece—the rhetorician, Thrasymachus.[1] Whether or not the latter is a fair example of the class to which he belonged we cannot say ; but he certainly

[1] See Chapter I, p. 1.

appears, both here and elsewhere, as a very perfect embodiment of the defects which Socrates saw in that class, namely confident dogmatism based upon what we should now call rationalism. Thrasymachus was not a cynic or a sceptic, except in reference to conventional ideas and the religious dogmas upon which they are based. He believed in his own convictions, and still more in the sufficiency of the " reason " which is his instrument of truth. He finds little difficulty in answering the question of Socrates. Right conduct ? Morality ? Justice ? Why, of course : that means the irksome and unpleasant things which foolish people think they must do just because their more astute masters have told them so. Right is might, and justice the invention of the strong, who have been shrewd enough to lay down the rules of the game of life in their own interest—for the weaker and less wise to obey. *They* know better than to let themselves be bound by the regulations they have made ; and every sensible man follows their example. Riches and pleasures and honours and all satisfactions worth having come to those who are bold enough to play the game in defiance of the rules and clever enough to escape detection or strong enough to defy punishment.

One almost expects Socrates to give the simple reply : " My friend, if there is any good in you, you will, sooner or later, outgrow all this. But in the meantime, discussion would be thrown away on you." But Socrates, being more patient than most of us, takes the trouble to argue with Thrasymachus at considerable length, though the argument is only worthy of the disputant who cannot possibly be convinced, but may conceivably be made a little humbler. It is hardly necessary, however, to summarise the argument between Socrates and Thrasymachus, which occupies the whole of the remainder of Book I. As argument, it is not in the least convincing, nor is it intended to be, for Plato wishes to show at the outset that the rationalist or materialist treatment of the problem of right and wrong can never lead to any satisfactory account of righteousness. That is the final answer to every sophist and materialist ; if they cannot accept it, it is because their eyes are blinded by the matter which they have made their universe. But the discussion has a direct bearing upon the serious argument of the succeeding books, for in it two positions of the greatest significance are established. The first is this : That the art of right conduct, like any other expert

art such as healing the sick or making music,[1] aims at a standard of absolute excellence which every true expert is perpetually trying to reach. And in the practice of the art nothing *competitive* enters: a true expert's success is never obtained at the expense of another expert. Each one strives to reach the goal of excellence or perfection, but it is with no thought of overreaching a fellow-expert. That sort of thing—the practice of competition or always trying to get the better of someone else—may be a common practice in our ordinary life and actions, but never in our actions as true experts. How should it be, when the goal of perfection is open to all, and each one's progress towards it makes easier the progress of all others? Let us banish then from our conception of right conduct all thought of competition, of the effort to overreach others, or to get some advantage at their expense. Such things are wholly alien to the conduct of the good man. And secondly: There is no *gain* attaching to any art as such, save the single reward of drawing nearer to the goal of excellence. This also is true of right conduct. It may be the case, as Thrasymachus says, that a man who wrongs others on a grand scale, boldly and like a tyrant, does indeed get what he wants, that is to say he gains the satisfaction of his most imperious desires. But *that* does not prove that the path of action he adopts is the "right" one, or that he has come within sight of the art of right conduct; nor, as we shall see, does it prove that he touches happiness at all. For "getting what we want" has no more to do with happiness than with the perfection which is the goal of art.

These two arguments foreshadow the whole teaching of the *Republic*. There is no relativity about Goodness; it is not a question of being better than we were, or better than others; it is not a question of winning any reward, even the reward of heaven. We think too much in terms of more or less, or better or worse. But that is the "competitive" way of thinking, and implies an absence of an absolute standard. True virtue (like true art) is related to an absolute Good: there is never any question of doing better than anyone else, or of beating one's own or others' achievements. We think, again, too much in terms of reward or

[1] Plato is very fond of calling moral conduct an "art"; and he uses the term in the sense of expert action based upon expert knowledge. For him, virtue is knowledge, and good conduct the art based upon it.

punishment. Our theories of morality are always tending to relate good conduct to its effects upon happiness ; and our every-day thought links virtue with the notion of merit. But merit implies that we are deserving of reward or praise in consequence of our effort in resisting temptation and overcoming difficulties. All these conceptions belong only to good conduct on the lower arc of life, in which the self is dominant and life is a continual struggle between the claims of duty (or the claims of others) and the claims of self. But Plato is preparing us for the conception of the righteousness which belongs to the higher arc, in which all desire for satisfaction of the self is purged away, and no thought of meritorious action enters any more than any thought of gain. The true goodness is the result of seeing and loving the absolute Good : when that state is reached, desire for praise or reward or satisfaction or happiness has become as meaningless as the conception of competitive struggle.

So much for the argument of the opening book of the *Republic*, which has the useful result of putting out of court sundry modes of approach to the great question—What is Righteousness ? and also of putting into their proper place certain typical modes of crude conception. The world is full of Polemarchuses and Thrasymachuses. Most of us, at one time or other, have been examples of the types they represent ; indeed, the types are perhaps characteristic of normal and necessary stages in the development of all thought. We begin by being content and pleased with the confident use of an accepted authority to settle any and every riddle of life, an authority given to us and accepted unquestioningly, but made our own by our acceptance of it and our respect for it, and therefore felt to be a possession which adds many cubits to our superiority over those who have not made it theirs. And then we pass on to the next stage, in which, all authority contemptuously tossed aside, we proceed to measure the infinite with the foot-rule of our own intelligence. And now we are more than ever satisfied with the results, and proudly confident of their finality. For have we not reached them, unaided, by the use of our own peculiar faculty, which, as intelligence, stands supreme, the only possible interpreter of an intelligible universe ?

Plato knew these stages well, and dealt with them wisely, kindly, and not impatiently, content to show that they do not

lead us far along the road to truth, for all their apparent certainty. But he makes no pretence of *convincing* the representative of the " rationalist " stage ; *his* dogmatism cannot be changed until at least he is willing to admit the possible existence of faculties of knowing and seeing which far transcend the faculty of whose skilful exercise he is so proud.

One other characteristic of this introductory book of the *Republic* must be noted. All through it we are dealing with the nature of Righteousness as a purely ethical problem, considering only its external or social side, in answer to the narrow question : What is right conduct ? or, What are right actions ? or, What is morality ? Asked in this form, the question may be answered, indeed, but never satisfactorily nor completely, never in its real relation to the greater question, What is Righteousness as a quality of the soul, an attribute of the divine in man ? Yet this limited form has usually been taken as the chief question of moral philosophy, leading to three types of answer, all alike unsatisfactory. According to one type, morality and the moral law appear as rather arbitrary ordinances of a divine ruler, or of a conscience or moral sense which acts as his viceroy. According to the second type, God is left out of the business, and conscience becomes a natural result of the compulsions of human law and public opinion, whose dictates are in turn determined solely by the pressure of our social needs and considerations of our social welfare. Morality thus becomes a natural and necessary element in social life ; and right conduct, or the content of the moral law, will vary, with time and place, according to the kind of pressure which the environment may happen to exert, and the kind of aims which society may happen to have made the objective of its dominant desires. And the whole of morality is relative and subordinate to the human happiness to the attainment of which it is supposed to furnish the means—this " happiness " being nothing more than the greatest possible satisfaction of the greatest possible number of desires on the part of the greatest possible number of people. This is Utilitarianism, or the rationalist explanation of right and wrong.

According to the third type, morality and the content of moral law appear as the dictates of the good will in all its relations to other wills, directed to the attainment of a perfection which may be indefinite, but is at any rate something more than the maximum

satisfaction of desire. But even in this account the emphasis is laid upon the external side of Righteousness—the necessary quality of our actions to others—and not upon its internal side, as a quality of the soul which we may regard as identical with its perfect wisdom and its supreme bliss.

Now in the first two types of ethical theory here outlined, if not also in the third, goodness is made to appear as a mode of restraint upon our activities, which may be salutary, but must needs be felt as irksome. This may be a quite satisfactory account of *morality*, which is, after all, a social phenomenon dependent upon the requirements of social life. The moral man or the moral soul is the one who obeys the highest known moral law in all his relations and actions, whether towards men or towards God. And the moral quality of *rightness* has a meaning only in connection with these relations to others; nor is this external reference lost by taking into full account the *motive* of the moral man's actions in every case. For the motive is also social, even in its highest form, of love for his neighbour and submission to the will of God. If we confine ourselves to the lower forms of these ethical theories—such as Utilitarianism—we find that the element of restraint is so intimately connected with the conception of morality that we are not brought within reach even of the Dharma of the lower path which I have described in the preceding chapter; and the very highest forms do not really carry us beyond it. It is clear, therefore, that Plato is compelled to brush aside quickly the lower forms, as he does in his first and second books; and eventually to rise far above even the highest forms. How else can he unfold his conception of Righteousness, not as a useful, salutary and wholly beneficial excellence of the soul, but as *the* supreme excellence, which alone gives life and the true joy of life, apart from any consequences of pleasure or pain, of reward or neglect, of success or failure?

At the beginning of the second book the question which Socrates is to answer is re-stated, this time in its true form. It is no longer—What is right conduct and the quality of right action? but—What is Righteousness, and the quality of the righteous soul? The question in this form is raised by the two brothers of Plato, Glaucon and Adeimantus, who are clearly intended to represent a type far above the stage of unreflective piety exemplified by Polemarchus or that of dogmatic rationalism

personified by Thrasymachus. For this reason, the whole of the remainder of the dialogue—or rather, discourse, for it is no longer a dialogue in anything but the mere form—is addressed to one or other of the two brothers, and their occasional comments and interruptions are used to mark difficulties or transitions in the argument. Adeimantus appears to be the profound thinker of the two, Glaucon being sometimes allowed to seem really stupid. It is significant, however, that the deepest and most difficult parts of the exposition are addressed to the latter ; and his failure to understand is probably intended to mark the fact that, at many points, the doctrine expounded by Socrates will be unintelligible to ordinary people.

It is not easy to describe the type or stage which these two brothers of Plato stand for. They are perfectly familiar with the sceptical rationalism expressed by Thrasymachus, and also with the far more plausible forms of it which are neither cynical nor purposely destructive. They confess themselves unable to rebut the arguments of Utilitarianism ; yet they find the conclusions wholly unsatisfactory, and incompatible with the conception of Righteousness which they intuitively believe to be true, since, without it, the moral universe loses all its reality. And they know that the answer which they cannot give is to be found somewhere ; they therefore turn to Socrates—" the life-long student of the Good "—as the one man who is likely to have found it.

The question they address to him is as follows : It cannot be denied that Thrasymachus is partly correct ; at any rate the world thinks so. It is generally admitted that mutual agreement, or social convention, has established a code of conduct which we call right. This code acts as a curb on our desires, and the observance of it makes it possible for all of us to live our lives with a moderate amount of satisfaction, and without the continual suffering which would follow the unchecked pursuit of pleasure by all. Consequently we approve it, very much as we might approve a strict regimen or diet which was necessary to keep us in health. But we don't *like* to be moral or righteous : who does like to have his passions and appetites constantly curbed ? We only submit to the necessity, and agree to call this irksome thing, morality, a *good* thing, just as an invalid might call his doctor's strict treatment good ; but we would all be glad to

escape from it if we could do so without suffering unpleasant consequences.

Further, this universal conception of morality and virtue as irksome but necessary things is plainly the result of the kind of teaching we all get from our parents and our elders. They bring us up in the belief that the path of virtue is both difficult and unpleasant: but then it is so respectable, and pays so well! The inference is obvious. If by any means we can secure the semblance and reputation of virtue with none of the restraints which are its true nature, then we shall manage our lives with real success. But surely the gods will see through this cunning device, and punish us after death if not before? Oh, no. The gods are rather fond of a really clever rogue—if we may take Homer's accounts for true; and, whether this is the case or not, every orthodox teacher assures us that they can be appeased by due and sufficient sacrifices. And who is in a better position to appease them than the really successful man?

Can you then wonder that the world rates virtue and righteousness so low, as disagreeable fetters, which prevent us, indeed, from injuring one another, but at the same time prevent us from benefiting ourselves in the ways we would choose?

So, Socrates, if you are to help us in our instinctive revolt against this belittling conception of goodness, you must show that Righteousness is, in itself and apart from all consequences, a good to be coveted, and a source of real happiness to its possessor. Take, then, for your example of the righteous man one who, because of his righteousness, is despised and spurned and evilly entreated both by men and gods, and ends this life in torture and crucifixion, without even the consolation of knowing that a heaven of comfort has been prepared for him hereafter by the gods—for his righteousness must be hidden even from them. Strip him bare of all results of his righteousness, except those which his own righteous soul may give him; let his sole rewards in the world be pain and shame from beginning to end of life. And take as your example of the unrighteous man one who wins all the honours and powers and successes and pleasures which he desires—and also the reputation, among gods and men, of exemplary righteousness. And *then* prove to us that the soul of the former is the happy soul, and the soul of the latter miserable. Lay bare the essential nature of Righteousness and Unrighteous-

ness, as each really exists in the human soul; and show that "by its own peculiar power, the one is the greatest blessing, the other the greatest curse, which the soul of man can receive into itself. . . ."

Such is Plato's statement of the question which he undertakes to answer—surely the boldest task which a philosopher has ever set himself to perform! For note how ruthlessly he has torn down and thrown aside every conceivable prop which may help him in his argument, every known device which moralist or philosopher can use, until he is left face to face with—what? The final question of ethics? The crux of human morality? The central problem of social conduct? Emphatically not: what moral or social philosopher has ever dared to state his problem so? Imagine, if you can, any sane thinker using such an introduction for the starting-point from which to embark upon the construction of a social Utopia or the explanation of social justice or a theory of human knowledge! What then? Is it not clear that Plato has purposely put the great ethical questions —What is righteousness? and What is happiness?—into a form which shuts out all consideration of social well-being and utility, and can have but one practical answer—the answer of religion:

> "Seek refuge in thy soul; have there thy heaven.
> Scorn them that follow virtue for her gifts."[1]

Is it not clear that he is expressly stating, in its deepest form, the central question of all religion, a question of spiritual psychology and spiritual ontology, a question which comes always at last to this: What is the true spirit of man, and the nature of the real world to which it belongs? What are those qualities and activities which raise it far above care for any earthly rewards or penalties? What is the certainty which can carry it through all sufferings and disappointments, counting these rather gain than loss? What is the vision before its eyes which blots out for it the things of this world, and seems to lead it on, triumphant and serene, into a world wherein there is a new heaven and a new earth, radiant with an unchanging bliss which we have no language to describe? For the moralist may talk of happiness; but both he and we mean by the word something quite incomparable

[1] From the *Bhagavad Gita*, Book II (Sir Edwin Arnold's translation). Only a variant, of course, of the better known saying, "The kingdom of heaven is within you."

with the state which belongs by right to the true soul. We have degraded the term until its connotation is inseparable from satisfaction of desire—a condition in which, while it lasts, all conscious desires are satisfied, in place of a condition in which no desire any longer exists to be satisfied. There shall be no happiness, in our sense, for the perfect soul. On its earthly pilgrimage, every desire shall be thwarted, every affection torn to pieces, every interest baffled—until it discovers, as Goethe discovered, that " our physical as well as our social life—customs, manners, art of life, philosophy, religion, nay, even many an accident—all are crying out to us, that we shall renounce " ; until it realises, as an Eastern teacher has put it, that " religion is only possible for those who are indifferent to pleasure and pain " ; and that " remembering God is life, but forgetting God is death " ; until it has reached the selfless love of which Spinoza was thinking when he warned us that we cannot be said to love God until we can love Him without caring whether He loves or hates us in return. Then, and then only, the soul has come to its true heritage, not of Happiness—Eudaimonia, great good fortune and the consciousness of it—but of Bliss, Makaria, the condition of those to whom alone the beatitudes of Christ apply.

Plato begins his task with characteristic skill. He does not draw attention to the fact that the question which he has now propounded cannot possibly be answered by any analysis of social or individual virtues as we know them in the world ; still less does he embark at once upon a semi-mystical account of the spiritual potentialities of man. He knew well enough that, had he done so, not one in a thousand of the Athenians would have taken the trouble to read any farther. But he begins quite simply with a search for goodness in the State and in the citizen, as though this would be quite enough to reveal the nature of the Righteousness whose existence he has posited. And the picture he draws of the State wherein goodness may be found is so fascinating, so paradoxical, so tantalising that every intelligent reader is led on by its charm until he finds himself plunged, whether he will or no, right into the heart of the religious teaching to which all the rest is but a prelude. " I am to show you," he says in effect, " the very essence of righteousness in the soul. Well, it is a hard thing to lay bare the nature of the good soul. Let us then first analyse the nature of the good State, in which

the qualities of the good soul are written large." Then follows the construction, step by step, of the famous *Republic* in which goodness resides. Is this intended to be an ideal? Yes and no. It is asserted to be good, without qualification, else it would not contain the virtue sought for. But it is not what we mean by an ideal State or Utopia. When we speak of a social Utopia, we are thinking of an imaginary condition in which the possibilities of social life may be most fully realised, and the human development of each " socius " may be most complete. But Plato is thinking of something rather different. When he calls his State perfect, he means that it is good in relation to the needs of *spiritual* development ; that in it alone can the true Philosopher or lover of Reality find the conditions necessary to his growth and the discipline compatible with his preparation for the path before him. To these requirements of the good soul the whole social structure and its every detail are subordinated. In all *our* social Utopias the end is happiness for all the citizens. Not so in his. Will his citizens be happy? he is asked later. " That is not the point," he replies, " we are not concerned with what they may or may not gain as individual citizens."

Again, we make for ourselves a social ideal as a goal or standard to which our ideas of social progress may be related—which shall, in fact, both justify and give validity to our efforts and schemes of progressive reform. But Plato is not interested in social progress in our sense, any more than he is interested in the increase of complexities, refinements and many-sided development which we call culture or progressive civilisation. All his thought about " social perfection " is determined by reference to an archetype which is essentially not social at all ; and in conformity with that he posits certain social conditions (very far removed from anything which we regard as cultured or progressive or even civilised) which alone can be called good in relation to the needs of the individual soul.

We may say, therefore, that the characteristics of the State which he describes are *necessary* rather than ideal. They conform and must conform, not only to the spiritual archetype on which his gaze is fixed, but also to the characteristics which mark the really good soul, so far as these can be manifested in the life of this world. He pretends, indeed, that he is building up a perfect State with a view to its *social* excellence, guided at each step

by the social interest of each feature. That is what his readers can understand and appreciate. But in reality he is doing nothing of the kind. He is merely copying—sometimes at the price of social absurdity—an individual pattern which is necessary and eternal, and, in its final form, independent of social conditions altogether. On no other supposition can we explain some of the almost grotesque features which his " perfect State " presents.

Its structure, moreover, is necessary or predetermined in another way. Most critics have accused Plato of straining the analogy between the State and the individual. But this is not the case at all. He cannot even be said to be using an analogy ; still less to be straining one. His conception of the created universe assumes an identity of structure in everything : an identity of psychical structure, also, in all things which are in the same stage of psychical development. The three " qualities " (as explained in the preceding chapter) form the fundamental structural elements of society just as certainly as they form the fundamental structural elements of the individual soul ; and the mode of their functioning, as well as the law of their right activity, is identical too. Plato is therefore completely justified, by his conception of the nature of things, in asserting that society, like the soul, contains the three great qualities or faculties in their psychological form of Desire, Passion and Intelligence ; that, in society, these qualities are severally inherent in groups or classes of the citizens ; that these classes must differ in their function, and that the difference must never be confused or obliterated ; and that the classes must therefore be kept rigidly distinct in position, work and power. We need not say that he is copying the model established by the Manu of ancient India as the necessary form of satisfactory political organisation. He sets up an exactly similar model because he is working with the same principles and the same conceptions.

But these points will become clearer as we proceed to note the features of the good State upon which Plato insists. I merely wish to remind the reader once more that these features are, as it were, predetermined. Plato is bound, by fidelity to his conception, first, to discover in society, in their proper places, the three psychical elements, Tamas, or ignorant desire, as the necessary basis ; Rajas, or the passionate element, as the possible auxiliary and defender ; Sattva, or the reasonable and good element, as

the guardian of the whole ; and secondly, to reproduce in the society which can be called good the marks of the good soul—perfect simplicity ; indifference to fluctuations of pleasure and pain, wealth and poverty, reputation and power ; steadfastness and immutability throughout all the changes of life ; and finally, perfect dutifulness or Dharma.

His argument proceeds as follows : The first and fundamental condition of social life is found in the nature of human desires. Every normal human being has more wants than he alone can satisfy by his own efforts. A community of at least four different producers, or agents of satisfaction, is required if we are to live a human life at all. And this number is clearly too small if we are to realise the true condition of healthy satisfaction of wants, namely, that each agent of satisfaction shall perform its own function only. Even our simplest wants will not be met by a farmer, a builder, a weaver, and a shoemaker alone, unless each does more than his proper work. We must have additional agents, carpenters and smiths and shepherds, for instance, and even traders and shop-keepers. Let us add these, in order that our city may realise its full stature. And having thus got our society in its simplest but adequate form, " a genuine and healthy city," let us see whether we can discover goodness and badness in it. Of course our citizens will live the very simplest kind of life, with a changeless vegetarian diet, and a changeless round of little occupations and interests, from the cradle to the grave, from one generation to another. But where is goodness or its opposite to be found among them ?

It just is not there. We seem to have made this first idyllic society positively too simple. Glaucon calls it a social condition fit only for pigs or other easily satisfied animals ; and perhaps he is right. Apparently we must complicate it, and make it luxurious, and then we may find both virtue and vice in it. We must abandon its perfect simplicity, and add to its necessary agents of satisfaction many who are *not* necessary, such as butchers and bakers, confectioners and courtesans, jewellers and embroiderers, actors and poets and artists and hosts of others, to say nothing of doctors and lawyers. And now we really *have* got a society, one which will surely yield us what we want. For do you not see that when its " element of desire " is so fully elaborated and diversified there must needs appear the other two parts or

elements which we are pledged to find? It will not long rest content with its present satisfactions; it will very soon covet more. And so war and quarrelling will arise; and these entail fighting men, for aggression and defence and the maintenance of order. And the fighting men must needs be specialised, and form a separate class, on the principle that each functionary must confine himself to his one special function. So we get our class of Auxiliaries, quite distinct from the producers or agents of satisfaction, and marked, as good watchdogs are, by the quality of combined fierceness and loyalty. And of these the best, or those in whom the faculty of discrimination and the love of knowing are most marked, will be the Guardians, the third and highest class. . . .

I think it is worth while to dwell for a moment upon the few pages in which Plato puts together the essential structure of his State. In the summary given above I have gone a little, but only a very little, beyond the actual text, in order to emphasise the significant points. Now it is clear that Plato has been driven, both by his conception of the necessary nature of society and by the requirements of his aim, into two contradictions, the one a contradiction of his own beliefs, the other a contradiction of existing fact and opinion; that is to say, he has already been led to do violence to both consistency and common sense in order to obtain the conditions which he believes are necessary. Thus, to take the first contradiction, there is no other justification for his weak abandonment of the "genuine and healthy society" which he first describes. It appears to be exactly the simple and perfect society which he wants to get: he says himself that it represents "the true and healthy constitution of the State"; and consequently we feel that his agreement with Glaucon's criticism of its simplicity is really sarcastic. "You can have a luxurious society, if you like," he says, and then proceeds to insert those very complexities and vices which he subsequently banishes. He pretends to take this "swollen and inflamed city" as the model in which the virtues are to be found; but in reality he only uses it just so long as it is needed, and then discards it. And it really *is* needed in order to reveal the social counterparts of "desire" and "passion" and "wise control." For the "genuine and healthy city" is altogether too simple to correspond with human nature. There is only one class in it, that of the

unconscious satisfiers of wants, the simple functionaries who do their day's work, eat their suppers and go quietly to bed every day. We cannot imagine them needing even a policeman—to say nothing of an army of trained soldiers. Nor do they need a class of rulers or guardians : instinct and habit give guidance enough and protection enough to their lives. Their society, in fact, corresponds only to man in the perfect animal stage, with normal appetites finding each its normal satisfaction, but without any conflict of desires, without any struggle or consciousness of struggle, without temptation or the need to resist it, without the " anger " which arises when desire is thwarted, and the reflective conscience by which desire and anger are controlled. Consequently it *must* be dropped—for the time being ; and a more complex society is substituted, in which it is possible to find, not only the necessary but scarcely conscious functionaries, but also the fully conscious classes of Vaishyas, Kshattryas and Brahmanas : not only the automatic processes of life, but also the complete psychical equipment of Desire, Passion and Intelligence.[1]

The second contradiction is equally inevitable. The whole experience of Greece at her best was that a citizen army was infinitely preferable to a separate soldier class. The secret of the strength of the Greek City-State lay in the fact that the first duty of every citizen was to fight for his country ; and that duty was as necessary a complement to his economic functions as the duty of obeying the laws and living decently. But Plato was compelled to contradict this experience and the true principle underlying it : how else could his model be made to answer its purpose ? A Kshattrya *caste* was needed, not merely the Kshattrya or warrior principle in every citizen's breast.

The separate caste of Rulers, or true Guardians, is only hinted at so far ; it emerges clearly at a later stage. Its existence does not involve any serious contradiction, except, perhaps, of the contemporary opinion of democratic Athens, which might fairly be disregarded. Plato does not at first clearly distinguish between

[1] This " simple and perfectly healthy city " may be said to correspond to the state of a little child—to which (on a different level) we must all return when we are born again, and so begin to walk the upper path of spiritual realisation. But ordinary human beings must first go through the stage of ever increasing complexity and (from the religious point of view) unhealthiness, in order to learn its lessons.

the Kshattryas and the Brahmanas. The two classes of Auxiliaries and true Guardians emerge together, the latter being, as it were, a superior class developed out of the former. But the distinction is clearly enough defined later, when the true Guardians are found to be those alone who are " capable of acquiring consummate skill in the art of ensuring their country's freedom," and who *know* the social principles which the Auxiliaries can only accept on trust.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF THE *REPUBLIC*, BOOK II (PART) AND BOOKS III AND IV. THE PURIFICATION OF THE GOOD STATE, AND THE EDUCATION OF THE GOOD SOUL. THE DEFINITION OF THE RIGHTEOUS CITIZEN.

THE outline of the social structure completed, Plato proceeds to purify the society so constructed into its proper harmony with the virtue of the good soul. This purification is effected in two ways: by education and by social ordinances. But these methods are not really separated by Plato. In his view, social ordinance and educational system are inseparable; the social environment is itself the great teacher, and the educator's skill divorced from the legislator's care would be of no effect at all. It is, however, convenient to draw a distinction between the education of the young by direct teaching, and the education of the citizens by the indirect influence of the social environment and the ordinances which regulate it; and Plato deals first with the former division, devoting to it the whole of the third book.

I confess I shrink from giving a summary of this book. The principles which it contains are expressed in language so simple and so beautiful that I would neither detract from its charm nor give any reader the least excuse for not reading it for himself. I am compelled, however, to give an outline of its teaching in order to make clear one very important point. It is this: Plato is not here concerned in the least with education as we usually think of it. His only aim is, as he tells us later, to devise means for "wheeling round the soul" from the worldly to the spiritual; in other words, he is laying down the principles of a true moral and religious training, and nothing else. Or rather, since even these terms do not convey enough, we had better say that he is thinking only of the best way to purify the human soul from the evil elements which every normal soul contains, and to set it in tune

with the spirit of goodness. And this "best way" consists, first, in a very rigorous and even austere purging of the educational influences by which the young are surrounded—especially in literature and art; and secondly, in an equally austere purification of the environment and mode of life in which the good soul must pass his days.

How these two objects are to be attained is told in the concluding pages of the second book and the whole of the third book. Taking first the teaching of religion, in its simple form of the inculcation of beliefs by scriptural stories and myths, Plato banishes all scriptures and hymns and poems which speak of God as other than He really is—the author of good and only of good, the source of all truth and only of truth, incapable of change and incapable of deception. Nor will any writings be admitted which make death seem a thing to be feared: "How can a man be brave who is haunted by a fear of death?"—or which make suffering and loss seem things to be lamented: "Is not a good man distinguished from the rest of the world by his peculiar independence of external things?" How then should he mourn for the loss of anything? Poets who tell us the doings of heroes and demigods shall only sing of examples of fortitude, of indifference to gain, of freedom from wrath and the desire for vengeance, of purity and fair dealing; for so only shall our young men and young women learn to love the virtues which they must themselves acquire.

Next in importance to the substance of the teaching is the form in which it is conveyed. For this the regulations can be laid down without difficulty. We must have whatever form is most simple, most direct, and most in consonance with the good man's invariable control of his emotions. In our poems we will insist upon the straightforward narrative style, in which there is no imitation of the words and voices of others—"the style, in fact, which an honourable and educated man will adopt whenever he is called upon to narrate anything." For our Guardians are not to learn the art of imitation; that would not be in harmony with the singleness of function which runs all through our State. And if any skilled imitator, such as a tragedian or an actor, pays us a visit and offers to entertain us, we will praise him for the astonishing cleverness of his versatility, but we will ask him, in all respect, to be kind enough to give his performance in some other

State, since all such entertainments are by law forbidden in ours.

Again, the melodies to which our hymns shall be set must be those only which express steadfast endurance in all activities, and peaceful sobriety in all relaxations, linked to a rhythm which is in harmony with the vibrations of the good man's nature.

In these ways we shall at once purge our State of its too great luxuriousness, and also obtain the requirements of a true " musical " education for our Guardians, especially if we apply the same canons of simplicity and austerity to all kinds of art and craftsmanship. For then all our poets and artists " will turn the power of their genius to picturing the nature of the fair and graceful in such a way that our young people, dwelling as it were in a healthful region, may drink in good from every quarter from which any emanation from noble works may strike upon their eyes or ears, like a wind wafting health from an invigorating land ; and so they will be won, from their earliest childhood, to glad and devoted harmony with the true beauty of reason." And then, when they wake from the half-sleep of youth, and knowledge comes to them, they will recognise her by the instinct of relationship, and will welcome her as their own peculiar friend.

So much then for the education by *music*, by which we mean the whole culture of the soul of which the Muses should have charge. But there is another, though less obvious, way by which the soul is educated—by the proper cultivation of the body and the right use of the whole physical environment. In this education by gymnastic, as we may call it, the same careful insistence upon true principles is necessary. We have seen that simplicity begets health and goodness, just as variety begets dissolution and disease. Simplicity, therefore, of diet and regimen shall be our rule in the treatment of the body. But do not think that this means a strained or forced simplicity, like that of an athlete's or a faddist's diet. We will have no excessive care of the body ; the less it is thought about the better will it be for the soul. All we require is that its proper growth and function shall be guarded by fixed rules of healthy living, and so its education will go on naturally and unconsciously. For remember, it is not really the body we are trying to educate, but always and only the soul whose servant it is to be. It is not physical

strength at which we are aiming, but the fortitude which is a quality of the soul.

Now if we are faithful to this principle of simplicity in all our education, both of soul and body, not only shall we find our city purged of all the variety and luxury which destroy goodness, but we shall also be able to rid ourselves, almost if not quite, of those twin symptoms of complexity, the lawyers and the doctors. For do you not see that these two estimable professions only become indispensable in proportion as complexity and variety are allowed to supplant the principles of simplicity and sobriety in the education of the young, and in the conduct of life? They are the necessary concomitants of luxury, with its distracting variety of appetite and thought. Our Guardians will have no need of them, since, like the labouring poor, they will have no time to be invalids, and, like true philosophers, they will have no squabbles for lawyers to settle. Our community as a whole will perhaps need a few of each; but they will be rather judges than practitioners, deciding who are fit to go on living, and who are so corrupt that they had better die. . . .

The above is a summary of Plato's answer to his own question—How shall we educate the chosen youths who are to become the guardians of our State? The answer contains all that he cares about in the matter of principles of education for the young; and what he cares about has little or no relation to the principles and systems which we modern educators are so busy elaborating. His account of the "right" education of youth is simply the answer to the question: "How shall we make and keep pure the hearts of the young?" And the answer is—By simplicity, purity, austerity, and yet again simplicity, in all the influences by which character is unconsciously formed. Secure this, he says, and you will secure for the young that pureness of heart which is the first great step to the knowledge of God. And, in the social picture, he adds—You will secure also freedom from lawyers and doctors—a subtle way of saying that the rightly educated character will be free from the personal ambitions which breed quarrelsomeness and discord in the soul, and from the desires for sense-pleasures which breed ill-health and discord in the body.

The modern educationist would like to claim Plato as one of his forerunners. It would be just as sensible to trace educa-

tional science back to the prophet Isaiah. For Plato neither gives nor wants to give any hints upon educational science; and, except so far as we are really intent upon religious and moral training, his principles are quite outside the scope of our imitation as educators. Just as the *Republic* as a whole contains little or no political doctrine which any politician can adopt, so its "ideal education" contains very little in the way of suggestion which any modern educator can apply. And for the very simple reason that Plato is always thinking of an unworldly aim, while we are thinking of the aims which the world approves. Plato has a single goal before him—the excellence of the perfected soul in its own realm of spiritual reality. We have before us the many-sided goal of all the excellences which successful management of this life requires. This is not a stupid criticism of the educational expert of to-day. His task is dictated to him; he is bound to accept its conditions. Society orders the product; he, the educator, is bound to furnish it. For education, like politics, is and must be what the life of society demands; and the life of society as we know it has for its dominant aims just those things which Plato refuses to consider at all—achievement, success and progress; and these aims are multiform, changeable and ever opening out into new variety. But the life of Plato's society all runs in a single channel, whose end is the unchanging and utterly simple goal of spiritual righteousness. To that end alone his principles of education and of law are related. The modern educator is tied down to *his* society's purposes, since education, in aim and method alike, is subordinate to the ends to which the whole social life is addressed. He cannot be allowed to educate youth along the path of complete simplicity when society has chosen to turn the highway of life into a wilderness of complex interests. He cannot make education single in its aim when society has taken variety for its goal. We must needs cultivate in the youth the powers which the man will need, in pursuit of whatever ends society imagines to be good. And every society very definitely puts the stamp of its approval upon successful achievement—by which is meant the doing successfully anything which the world thinks worth doing. This is the general aim for which the young citizen must be prepared; moreover, it is necessary that it should be so, and, in a sense, quite right. For the aim includes, first and most obviously, the

successful attainment of a livelihood by each citizen—an end upon which society is bound to insist. It includes also the attainment of numerous ends which are admittedly beneficial to the individual, and are assumed to be beneficial to society too—increase of wealth, for instance, or achievement in any recognised department of activity, such as politics or commerce or science or art or literature. The pursuit of these ends is not necessarily selfish : the motive as well as the result may be the increase of social well-being. But the point to note is that the end is many-sided, and the approved channels of activity very numerous and diverse ; and therein lies the educator's difficulty. He must accept society's estimate of good ends, and must devise such instruction for the young as will best " draw out " the faculties likely to be most useful in the after-struggle to attain them. In other words, the conditions of his task are dictated to him. He may not and must not be a sheer idealist ; he may not set aside the worldly common sense of parents and society, in favour of any unworldly vision of a possible kingdom of righteousness. The interest of society will not allow him to say—" This is what I believe life is meant to lead to, and for this alone I will prepare the young put under my care." He is forced to compromise, and to combine his own single aim with the multitudinous requirements of his society. Even on a very elementary level singleness of aim is not permitted to him. Witness the continual complaints of physiologist and psychologist to-day in the matter of the education of adolescents. These experts merely ask that we shall subordinate all other aims of education to one during the three or four critical years of puberty. The one aim they would have us follow is admittedly of the first importance : no one questions the utility of health ; no one disputes the expert's assertion that health in adult life, not physical only, but mental and moral too, depends in great measure upon the careful treatment of the child during the period of adolescence. Yet the educationist is not allowed to follow the expert, and to make paramount the known requirements of adolescent development during the years of adolescent change. Society and the parents will not have other ends left out of account : direct preparation for some kind of successful achievement must go on even at the expense of the health which, indirectly at least, is a condition of the very achievement desired.

How then shall we hope to make paramount the supposed requirements of a quite unworldly and intangible end ? A society which could allow us to do so would already be ideal, and perhaps too good for the world of struggle as we know it. It is hardly possible that any human society which intends to live and thrive and succeed among its competitors, should deliberately turn its back upon the " goods " whose solid utility it has proved, and embrace as its only intrinsic " good " the end of holiness or righteousness, preparing its future citizens for this and this alone, and accepting in faith not only the end itself, but also the method of preparation for the attainment of it.

Now Plato is faced by no such difficulty. He brushes aside all ends save one ; he admits no requirements save those of spiritual purification ; his ideal stands alone, free from the confusion of worldly considerations of utility, achievement, success or even welfare. For he is not thinking of a worldly society at all. He is not educating citizens for a citizen life ; still less is he preparing social units for successful competition in the struggle for earthly well-being. He is preparing a human soul to tread a path which is neither social nor earthly ; he is laying down the conditions of development for the man or the woman who shall be " fit for the kingship of wisdom." His education, therefore, is simply the necessary preliminary[1] training of the good soul in habit, attitude and belief—a training to which, quite apart from all systems of education, every soul must submit if it is to run the race which leads to eternal peace. In other words, Plato is not outlining a system of education for useful citizens who shall become successful rulers of a prosperous State. He is only defining the conditions of training for a human soul, which must become master of itself in order that it may be able to find its way to God. And, since only the pure in heart can see God, he must needs set every influence to work which makes for purity, and so produce the purged soul, austere in thought and act, indifferent to the promptings of desire, free from all fear and care of consequence, " simplified " far beyond any social or worldly needs and standards.

This fundamental difference between the purpose of the Platonic

[1] I say " preliminary," because it is followed by a very different and much more advanced education, described in Book VII. Here we are dealing only with the general education outlined in Books III and IV, which Plato afterwards refers to as the " training by habit."

education and the purposes of all our educational systems is very clearly brought out in a later book (the seventh) where Plato expressly tells us that his education is designed simply and solely to awaken the spiritual faculty which every soul contains, by " wheeling the soul round and turning it away from the world of change and decay." He is not concerned with any of those " excellences of mind " which may be produced by training and discipline : his only aim is to open the eye of the soul, to bring into activity the hidden power of spiritual vision which lies dormant in every one of us—dormant, yet perfect, the key to all wisdom, the source of all understanding, potentially all-knowing, and therefore in need of no instruction, but only needing that " uncovering from the mud and mire " of worldly preoccupations which is the task of the true educator. This is tantamount to saying that the whole of Plato's education is a *religious* education. It is clear, therefore, that its principles are not and cannot be applicable to the systems and methods of secular education, or training for ordinary life in the world, in which we are interested. The danger of any such application may be illustrated by a single example. Plato lays down the principle (in the seventh book) that there must be no compulsion in the teaching, but that " early education must be a sort of amusement." Does this mean that Plato is an advocate of the doctrine that children should never be forced to learn lessons which they do not like ? Not in the least : the principle has no application at all to the ordinary education of the young, and becomes ludicrously false when so applied. But in relation to true religious education it is absolutely right : you cannot compel the soul—at any age—to love the God which does not appeal to it. Plato's early education has a single aim—to make the soul " in tune " with God. Many souls are not yet ready to be put in tune : very well then, let them not be forced into the religious life. We want only those " rare characters " who are naturally fitted for the great quest of the spiritual life ; let our early education reveal them, for they will be known by their instinctive love of the reflections of good with which our whole educative environment surrounds them. And *these* will be the souls " fit for philosophy," who shall be privileged to pass on to the higher education.

If we bear in mind this fact—that Plato is wholly occupied with the education of the soul which is to become righteous : and

if we remember further that he is not really concerned with the conditions of a social Utopia, but only with those of an individual ideal; we shall have little difficulty in meeting some obvious objections. To begin with, his sympathies appear to be so narrow that he gives not a single thought to the education of the lower orders—the great and important Vaishya caste or working-class, the toilers and producers upon whose shoulders rests the whole burden of providing the means of livelihood for all. This fault has sometimes been attributed to his aristocratic and conservative prejudices; but it is not a fault at all, nor has it any connection with political feeling. His "working-classes" are simply the desires of a man—writ large; and you cannot speak of educating desire without grave psychological inaccuracy. The desiring element is merely a given force in the soul, which can be and must be controlled. What *can* be educated and trained is the faculty of control, the higher elements in the soul by which the desires are governed and kept in their place. The education, therefore, is necessarily confined to the two classes of Auxiliaries and Guardians; and it is intended far more for the latter than for the former. In the more general "training by circumstance" which we shall find described in the fourth book, the lower orders are allowed a small share: they are to be protected from any excess of wealth or poverty. And this is just all you can do for the desires: you can make it easier for them to do their proper work of leading to satisfaction of vital needs, without the starvation involved in an exaggerated asceticism, and without the grossness induced by a too plentiful supply of opportunities of satisfaction.

Again, it is sometimes said that Plato is too much influenced by his admiration for the famous discipline of Sparta. But the similarity of his educational system to the Spartan model is much less pronounced than the dissimilarity. The Spartan training was a magnificent failure. It attained its aim: but its aim was hopelessly wrong. It treated man as though the Rajas or Thumos element was the highest his soul possessed; and fortitude therefore its highest virtue, a kind of loyal fierceness controlled by blind devotion. But the whole gist of Plato's system is its bearing upon the element of Reason, and its virtue of wise prudence; the soul must be brave and loyal in order that it may learn to be philosophic, in order that it may be able to know and love truth,

not merely accept in blindness and hold fast in bigotry whatever opinion may be given to it. So far as the more elementary training is concerned, Plato does indeed outdo Sparta ; but that is in obedience to a much higher model. For all through his ruthless pruning away of the excrescences of desire and taste and whim, which the world calls " cultured interests " and which Plato calls pernicious variety, he is following the ideal held up to us again and again in the scriptures of the East. I do not, however, wish to labour this point now, for it might very easily have happened that Plato reached his conception of *human* goodness, and of the education needed to produce it, independently of any Eastern influence. But the teaching of the Vedas supplies such an illuminating commentary, and makes so clear the aim which dominates Plato's purging of environment and his education of the lower soul, that I cannot refrain from quoting a few passages to illustrate the parallelism.

Take, for example, this account of what the good man shall aim at becoming, repeated again and again, like a constant refrain, in the verses of the Hindu scriptures :

" One who is freed
In all his works from prickings of desire,
Burned clean in act by the white fire of truth,
The wise call that man wise ; and such an one,
Renouncing fruit of deeds, always content,
Always self-satisfying, if he works,
Doth nothing that shall stain his separate soul,
Which, quit of fear and hope, subduing self,
Rejecting outward impulse, yielding up
To body's need nothing save body, dwells
Sinless amid all sin, with equal calm
Taking what may befall, by grief unmoved,
Unmoved by joy, unenvyingly ; the same
In good and evil fortunes ; nowise bound
By bond of deeds."

Or this, spoken by the divine Teacher, in answer to his pupil's question, " What is his mark who hath the steadfast mind ? "

" When one
Abandoning desires which shake the mind,
Finds in his soul full comfort for his soul,
He hath attained the path ; that man is such !
In sorrows not dejected, and in joys
Not overjoyed ; dwelling outside the stress

Of passion, fear, and anger ; fixed in calms
Of lofty contemplation ;—such an one
Is Muni, is the Sage, the true Recluse !
He who to none and nowhere overbound
By ties of flesh, takes evil things and good,
Neither desponding nor exulting, such
Bears wisdom's plainest mark !

" But If one
Ponders on objects of the sense, there springs
Attraction ; from attraction grows desire,
Desire flames to fierce passion, passion breeds
Recklessness ; then the memory, all betrayed,
Lets noble purpose go, and saps the mind,
Till purpose, mind, and man are all undone.
But if one deals with objects of the sense
Not loving and not hating, making them
Serve his free soul, which rests serenely lord,
Lo ! such a man comes to tranquillity." [1]

These passages are of course intended to describe a perfection of soul far transcending the virtue which Plato is trying to educe in his Guardians by the preliminary education. But the characteristics which mark the perfect man in his passage through this life are necessarily manifested in their simplest form as the essential virtues of the worldly path—the very temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice which the Guardians are to show. The diviner excellence is to be developed at a later stage ; but already Plato's interpretation of the cardinal virtues upon which ordinary morality insists is very close to the interpretation given by the Eastern writers. It is, in fact, already a religious, not an ethical, interpretation. His temperance is more than moderation and control of excessive desire ; his fortitude more than bravery and endurance ; his prudence more than " prudentia " or the sensible management of life ; his justice a far greater thing than fair dealing between man and man.

Plato has already distinguished between his true Guardians and his Auxiliaries ; but at the end of the third book he makes the distinction clearer. The true Guardians or rulers are those who show an unwavering zeal for the interest of the State, with single-minded devotion to *its* good and not their own ; those who can show, in face of all temptation, that they are " safe keepers of this inward conviction, that they must always do what

[1] From the *Bhagavad Gita*.

is best for the State"; those whose natures have been "so wrought upon by education as to take, as it were, the colour of the laws—an indelible colour, which even those terribly strong detergents, pleasures and pain and fear and desire, cannot wash away." The Auxiliaries, on the other hand, are just good and faithful watchdogs, not rulers in any sense at all. They have, it is true, their share in the education which has been so carefully arranged; but it is not really meant for them, and only has a negative effect upon them. It is intended "to lower their tone by its soothing influence, till their wildness has been tamed by harmony and rhythm."[1] Well may one wonder what kind of a *social* Utopia it can be in which many of the most important arrangements are designed for the exclusive benefit of a minutely small section of the citizens, while, of the rest, some are allowed to be so far gainers by them as to "have their tone lowered," and the great majority are not affected at all! For we must remember that the true Guardians—the one centre of interest in the State—are very few in number: a very select little band of rare natures.

Having definitely distinguished the three classes, Plato stamps each with the permanent mark of its grade. The true Guardians are golden in nature, the Auxiliaries silver, the rest—that is, the producers and traders of every sort—copper or iron. These distinctions are never to be confused: the grades are eternally distinct. But it may happen that here and there a golden or silver nature may be found in the lowest class, and a copper or iron nature in the higher, each revealed by its conduct and the manifestation of its character under trial. And in that case, but in that case only, there may be interchange between the classes.

Very faithfully is Plato following the model established by the Manu of the Hindus. "I am he who made the castes, portioning to each its place according to its qualities and gifts." Or again, "For the increase of the world's well-being, the Creator sent forth the Brahmana, the Kshattrya, the Vaishya, and the Sudra." And further, "Not birth, nor servants, nor study, nor ancestry, can decide whether a person is one of the twice-born, and to which of the three types he belongs. Character and conduct alone can

[1] *Republic*, p. 442.

decide." And finally, whenever mixture of the castes appears, then the age of darkness begins. Such is the teaching of the Manu, faithfully reproduced by Plato.[1]

The picture of the "ideal State" is completed by a short account of the discipline by circumstance and environment to which the Guardians and Auxiliaries are to be subjected. They are to live like campaigners in a military camp, sheltered from the weather, rather than housed, with sleeping places instead of homes, without comforts, without possessions, without anything which anyone may call his own rather than another's. Their daily necessaries they shall receive from their fellow-citizens, as wages for their services; and "they shall feed at common mess tables, and live together as men do in a camp." Above all, their hands shall be clean from the touch of silver and gold: they shall not pollute the pure metal of their natures by contact with earthly ore, nor mix their spiritual riches with the counterfeit wealth of the world, defiled as it is with the countless impieties which have flowed from it. (Just so the Brahmana was not allowed to earn his livelihood by ordinary pursuits, but "must lead the life of straight simplicity, shunning all riches and all crooked ways of world-minded men," and obtaining from others the bare necessaries of life.)

At this point in the dialogue Adeimantus interrupts with the objection that Socrates is not making these Guardians particularly happy. He has deprived them of all ordinary opportunities of obtaining that satisfaction of desires which the world calls happiness. Quite true, says Socrates, but that is not our object. It will not surprise us to find that they *are* very happy indeed; but our object at present is to make not this one class, but the whole State as happy and as good as possible.

He then proceeds to ordain that in the State as a whole there shall be no excess of wealth or poverty. As the Guardian and Auxiliary classes shall have no private property at all, so the producers and traders shall not be allowed to heap up wealth; else

[1] The above quotations are from the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Manu*, I and II. In the last passage quoted, "one of the twice-born" means a member of one of the three highest castes, all of whom were called twice-born. The Sudras alone are only once-born, and therefore on a lower level altogether. The "second birth" (a symbol of regeneration corresponding perhaps to the rite of Confirmation in the Christian Church) is not permitted to them. They must be born again in another life into one of the higher castes before they are qualified for salvation.

we should get not a single city but a double one, for wherever wealth is amassed by one class, the result is a city of the rich side by side with a city of the poor, each hostile to the other. But our State must be really one, and must not be permitted to expand, in size or in possessions, beyond the limits of a true unity. It shall be an unchanging unity too, revealing only the internal progress which comes from the cumulative effects of good nurture acting upon good natures. But innovation of any kind, in the system of education and nurture, shall be wholly forbidden. For innovation opens the door to lawlessness and licence ; and these, whether in education or amusements, lead certainly to ruin of the health of the State, exactly as they ruin the health of the individual.

And now the organisation of our State is complete, and we must begin the task of finding wherein Justice may be found in it, and what is the nature of its Justice. Well then : the State being perfectly good, it will of course contain the four cardinal virtues of prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice ; and if we can discover three of these qualities it will be easy to point to the remaining one. There is no difficulty about the first. Prudence in council, or knowledge, or protective science clearly belongs to the smallest class, the Ruler-Guardians. As to the second, we call a State brave when it fights well ; and we do not look for this quality anywhere but in the portion of the State which fights for its defence ; so clearly its fortitude must reside in the fighting class, the Auxiliaries. The third quality, temperance, is not so easy to localise, for it is a kind of harmony or orderliness, a mastery of one part over another, of the good principle over the bad. Well, in our State the desires of the many vulgar are controlled by the prudence of the educated few ; and that condition of controlling and being controlled is temperance, a unanimity or concord between the naturally better element and the naturally worse as to which of the two has the right to govern. Of course, we cannot say it *resides* in the lower elements ; but they are concerned in it—passively. These three virtues being discovered, it should be easy to find the remaining one, justice. Obviously, it is the universal principle upon which we insisted from the very beginning, that every individual and every class should have and hold to one occupation, and only one ; and this principle of

doing one's own business only is justice ;[1] for it is the only principle which can compete with prudence, fortitude and temperance, in its importance to the well-being of the whole State. And the opposite of justice, that is, injustice, is any kind of meddling with any other function than one's own, or any confusing of the three great classes.

The good State has now served its purpose of revealing to us the nature of goodness written large in letters which we have been able to read ; and we can, in the light of this discovery, interpret the individual soul which is our society's archetype. The soul possesses the same three qualities which we made the basis of our State's structure : ignorant desire, capable of submission ; passion or fierceness, capable of loyal service ; and intelligence, capable, after right education, of the wise guidance of the whole. You can easily prove the existence of these three qualities by a little introspection. Your desires, you will find, are frequently pulled back and kept in check by a very different principle, which has all the marks of reason and reflection. This is intelligence, controlling the very different element of desire. And you will find also that a third principle constantly appears, a kind of passionate anger, directed, not against the reasonable control of desire, but against the desire itself whenever it breaks from control and leads us into unreasonable excesses. This is passion, distinct from both desire and intelligence, but by nature inclined to ally itself to the latter.[2]

In this tripartite individual soul, as in the tripartite State, the four cardinal virtues reside when the whole is well ordered. The soul is temperate when the two lower qualities agree to be governed by the higher ; it is brave, when the passionate element holds fast, through all pain and pleasure, the instructions of reason as to what is to be feared and what is not ; it is prudent in virtue of the dominance of the small part which alone knows what is best ; and it is just or righteous when each of the three

[1] This extraordinary and entirely un-Greek definition of Dikaiosune is explained by the meaning of Dharma. See Chapter II.

[2] How far Plato is right in regarding Rajas or Thumos as the natural ally of reason, it is difficult to say. In the Hindu philosophy, this quality is, in its simplest form, the anger which arises whenever desire is thwarted—a description which seems to imply considerable friendship for desire ! But in all its forms, especially as ambition or devotion (the quality of a higher sort of "attachment" than that of desire), it is admitted to be tinged with reason in a way in which desire is not.

faculties does its right work rightly. And finally, we discover that this Righteousness is " not something to do with a man's outward performance of his work, but with the inward performance of it which truly concerns the man himself, and his real good." It is, in fact, the virtue of having his house in good order ; so that, having complete mastery of himself, he lives his life in concord with the good, his soul resembling a well-tuned instrument, from whose strings every chord struck is a perfect harmony. And Unrighteousness is the opposite of this : a condition of endlessly jarring discord in the soul, each part always at war with each, each faculty constantly usurping and misusing the powers which are never meant for it to use, each adding to the soul's disharmony and foulness and disease.

Our further question—Which of the two shall most profit a man ?—has come to seem ludicrous. Nobody will now maintain that life is worth having on any terms at all, " if the constitution of the very principle by which we live is going to rack and ruin " under the sway of Unrighteousness. . . .

Plato's picture of the ideal State has, indeed, served its purpose—the delightful purpose of proving the very principles assumed in its construction. The artificiality of the device becomes almost too obvious when the localisation of the four virtues is undertaken. The degradation of the whole industrious and working-class into the ignominious position of " the bad element," which cannot, even at its best, claim the virtue of temperance, would not have been proclaimed so boldly by even the most aristocratic and bigoted philosopher, if his intention had been to put before us a passably plausible " ideal Republic." But to Plato, who cares little about the social aspects of the picture, the degradation is necessary and right. Tamas, Epithumia, desire, ignorance—call it what you will—this lowest principle of the conscious soul *is* bad, and is the root of nearly all evil. Then let it be made to appear so, boldly and openly, in the " large picture " of the soul.

The placing of the second principle, Rajas or Thumos, involves a much more serious shock to our expectations, and an even braver defiance of common opinion. For just as Plato contradicted all Greek experience and conviction when he separated the duty of fighting for one's country from the normal citizen's

duty, and made his soldiers a peculiar professional class, so he contradicts all political experience when he divorces the fortitude of a State from any relation to the character of the great mass of its citizens, and connects it exclusively with the character of its professional fighters. It is significant, too, that this astonishing social psychology implicitly contradicts the great principle of *unity* upon which he has just insisted so strongly. The State must be really one, in feeling, thought and action. But what kind of unity is it which allows the quality of fortitude to enter into the State, not through the characters of all its citizens, but through those of a small number only, while the majority have no part nor lot in the very feeling and faith upon which a State's existence so often depends? If a State is not one in fortitude, it is not likely to remain one in any sense at all for very long. But what would you? The Rajas element and its virtue are specialised and distinct in the individual soul; they *must* be specialised and distinct in the social picture too.

I think I have laboured this point enough, or more than enough. The social picture must not all be taken seriously by those who are interested in the betterment of social structure. Its lesson is not social or political, but psychological and ethical—and even more than ethical. And what *is* to be taken seriously is its revelation of the necessary condition of the growth and nurture of the good soul in *any* society; of the necessary conditioning of the character and conduct of the good man in *any* kind of State; of the necessary attitude to *any* social environment and the necessary treatment of *all* social circumstances which must be learned and practised by every soul that aspires to enter the pathway of spiritual life. All these "necessities" do, indeed, make up an ideal which bears directly, if only we could see the bearing more faithfully, upon all our problems of social betterment; but it is not a social ideal. It is far in advance of any Utopia; it differs, in kind as in degree, from any dreamer's scheme of a perfected social order; it is a veritable "pattern laid up in heaven," which here and there an individual may realise—but human society never, since, in realising it, human society would cease to be.

But I suppose it is, after all, the greatest possible tribute to the genius of Plato that all of us are able to find in his "social picture" just the very things which our dominant interests

prompt us to look for. The coldly analytical Aristotle found exactly the political and ethical inaccuracies which he loved to criticise ; the rationalist Grote found, as was to be expected, very much to patronise, and very little to understand ; political philosophers have found continual stimulus to their thoughts about citizenship ; and ardent social reformers have found, not a stimulus merely, but even an inspiration such as few social Utopias have afforded. Yet there is something oddly pathetic in the fact that the *Republic* has been hailed with delight even by naturalistic communists, of all people in the world ! For Plato's communism is the very antithesis to that at which they aim. In the first place, it is not intended to apply to any except just those classes which could not exist in the political communist's ideal State. In Plato's *Republic*, possession of wealth and private property are forbidden only to the aristocracy—who do no " useful " work, and live a kind of " parasitic " or dependent life—not to the producers and toilers who really earn their livelihood. To separate these from the use and ownership of wealth would be an impossible absurdity, according to the Platonic psychology ; the producers *must* both get and have wealth, exactly as the necessary desires must both get and have satisfaction ; and not only so, but each separate desire must both get and enjoy its own satisfaction. The only rule is—No *excess* of wealth or property or enjoyment of satisfaction for any one of them.

In the second place, the whole motive of Plato's ideal is, of course, in the deepest antagonism to the motive of all ordinary communistic schemes for pooling wealth in order that there may be the greatest possible abundance of enjoyable things for each and all. In proportion as Plato's citizens become good, in that proportion is satisfaction of desire withdrawn from them, and all care about enjoyment falls away from them, until the very best are left bare of everything we count worth having—stripped more particularly of all the good things whose abundance for all is held out as the great attraction of the communist's ideal. This is again only another way of saying that Plato is providing for the needs of the spiritual man, while social Utopians are considering the needs of the natural or worldly man ; and spirit and world are eternally distinct.

There is one other feature to be noted in connection with Plato's construction of his perfect State. We have seen how,

little by little, his social interest is narrowed down until it is entirely focussed upon the very small class of the Guardian-rulers. This is in strict conformity with his preconceived analysis of the soul, of whose parts the largest—ignorant desire—deserves the least attention, and the smallest—intelligent reason—deserves the most. It is in strict conformity, too, with the motive of the whole work. We shall find, when we reach the " kernel " of the argument in the sixth and seventh books, that Plato's central aim is to explain the path to Righteousness through *wisdom*, not through faith or love. It is important to bear this fact constantly in mind, for it explains many difficulties (such as the later treatment of art, for example). Its bearing upon the astonishing neglect of the great mass of the citizens of his State is obvious. The " intelligence element " alone is the ground out of which, as it were, there springs the faculty of " divine discernment "—Nous, or the power of apprehending reality. Consequently, this " intelligence element " alone is worth both careful attention and careful education. The other elements in the soul (and therefore in the social picture too) are so subordinate that the highest of them cannot be regarded as more than a useful watchdog, while the lower obtain all the attention they deserve—by being suppressed.

# PART III

# SPIRITUAL REALISATION; OR THE PATH OF RELIGION. *REPUBLIC*, BOOKS V, VI, AND VII

## CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THE *REPUBLIC*, BOOK V (PART). THE COMMUNITY OF OCCUPATIONS FOR MEN AND WOMEN. THE COMMUNITY OF HUSBANDS, WIVES AND CHILDREN. THE KINGSHIP OF THE PHILOSOPHER.

PLATO has finished the picture of the perfect life and the perfect soul on the lower path—the path of pursuit of ends in the world, the path of bondage to the "qualities," the path whose Dharma is only a reflection of the Righteousness still to be revealed. To his hearers it seemed quite good enough, as fair an ideal as humanity could need. "But," as they say later, "it seemed you had an even better condition to describe to us." This better condition of the soul and its life is the theme of the three books which I have grouped together as the second part; and they may therefore be regarded as the kernel of the whole work. In them Plato undertakes his supreme task of revealing the meaning of true religion—a task so difficult that he is compelled to state and re-state his arguments in many different forms, to use one analogy after another to make his conceptions clear—and to express himself finally dissatisfied with the result. His hearers *cannot* understand him: again and again their answers show that they *will* insist upon interpreting what he says in the light of what the world calls knowledge, and that their conception of good cannot free itself from worldly considerations of utility. At one point he is even moved to sarcasm, and rebukes Glaucon with most unusual severity because he cannot rise above the

literal and obvious interpretation of the argument. He is troubled, too, to find words with which to express his meaning: the common use of such terms as "science" and "understanding" has confused all the great issues; yet we must needs use them as best we can. And more than once he hints that he is not attempting to take the highest road, nor to reach the highest goal. "Tell us more about the supreme science," says Glaucon, towards the end; "tell us what are its divisions, and its methods; for these may be the roads which will lead us to the very spot where we may end our search." "My dear Glaucon," is the reply, "I would willingly do so, but you would not be able to follow me farther."

Before, however, we try to understand whither Plato is leading us in this search for the Righteousness which is not of this world, we must deal with some of the smaller difficulties which this second part of the *Republic* presents. Just as, in the earlier part, Plato began the search for human righteousness, not directly, but in connection with a fanciful social State, so again he begins his greater quest by a return to the social counterpart of the soul. It is obvious that this cannot possibly be of use now, even for purposes of illustration, in the account of the nature and powers of the free soul, since all the latter's highest activities belong to a region outside this world altogether, and it must needs be compelled to come back to its social interests and duties, exactly as anyone who is not blind would need to be compelled to leave a world of light and return to a place of permanent darkness from which he had once managed to escape. Why then does Plato go out of his way to drag in the social State once more, and fix our attention upon it more closely than ever? Is it in order that he may once again succeed, by appealing to our dominant interests, in leading us imperceptibly into the very heart of a difficult philosophical argument? I am afraid this explanation will not altogether serve. The beginning of the fifth book does, it is true, give the reader a kind of delightful relaxation by its very fascinating discussion of the two daring social proposals—the community of occupations for women and for men, and the community of husbands, wives and children. But these are followed by the final proposal—on which depends the possibility of realising the ideal State—that the supreme government must be put into the hands of a philosopher; and the

whole discussion of this has a far deeper intention than any mere appeal to our interest. Moreover, it is dealt with very seriously, not in the least playfully; and in the discussion the *social* aspects of it are treated as being of real importance. All this seems, I confess, to militate against my contention that Plato's "ideal State" is not intended to be taken as a serious social Utopia; for if so, why the repeated assertion of the condition of its realisation?

This difficulty I must deal with, first summarising the contents of the fifth book.

Having finished the first four books, Socrates pretends that his real task is completed, and all that remains for him to do is to describe the various causes of demoralisation of a good soul or a good State. But he is reminded that he owes it to his hearers to explain what is involved in the "common possession of all things" which he has ordained for his Guardians and Auxiliaries. Does this mean that they will hold their wives and children in common? And if so, how?

To this Socrates replies that for men born and educated as he has described, the only right method of acquiring and treating children and wives will be to follow the impulse implanted in them, always to do the thing that is best for the flock under their charge. And "the thing that is best" implies, first of all, that no difference whatever shall be made between men and women, whether in the matter of their education, or of their pursuits, or of their position as guardians and rulers. In reference to these things, nature has ordained no essential difference between the sexes: how then shall we dare to differentiate? Women are rather less strong than men: that is all. They can do, and do well, all the important things which a man can do; the only difference is that they cannot do some things quite so vigorously or so unwearyingly as men. Clearly then women, as well as men, will be Auxiliaries, doing as the men do in school and gymnasium, in camp and on the battle-field. And women, as well as men, will be Guardians, sharing with them the government, guidance and control of the State. And for all these functions we shall not consider the sex-difference of any more importance than the difference, let us say, between a man who is bald and a man who is not.

This, then, is the first implication of our "best arrangement"

in regard to the sexes : there must be community of pursuits and activities for men and women. But the second implication is a more difficult matter. It is clear that, when both sexes live and work in such close contact, they will be led, by their strong natural instincts, to mate together. But irregular alliances would be a profanation in our State : the marriage union must be regarded as a very sacred thing, and its sanctity will only attach to marriages which are for the public good. Our rulers must therefore arrange, first of all, that only those shall be allowed to mate who are really fittest to produce good children ; and secondly, that a halo of sanctity shall surround these unions, and these only. Doubtless these arrangements will require a good deal of trickery on the part of the rulers ; those who are deprived of the privilege of mating, and those who are dissatisfied with the mates allotted to them, will need some very clever lying to appease them. But our rulers are authorised to use this kind of medicinal deception. And their method will be this : certain fixed times will be chosen as mating periods, and elevated into times of holy festival. Lots will then be drawn by all the men and women of the right marriageable age—25 to 55 for men, 20 to 40 for women ; and these lots will decide who, on each occasion, is to mate with whom, and who is to be left without a mate. They will all *think* it is a real lottery, presided over only by the goddess of chance. But in reality the rulers will see to it that all the lots are decided beforehand, and that nothing is left to chance at all. How else can they ensure that children are bred only from the best stocks ?

Then, as fast as children are born, they will be handed over to special officers to rear in a general nursery, where all the mothers will be brought as required to suckle the infants. But no mother will know her own child, nor will any child be hers more than anyone else's. They will all be the children of all the parents of that year, and each will be brother or sister to all the rest.

In this way, and in this way only, can you turn your State into a real brotherhood or veritable unity, in which the words " mine " and " thine " have no meaning apart from " ours " ; in which, when anything happens to anyone, every member will with one accord say " It is well, or it is ill, with mine " ; in which the community of feeling and the reality of sympathy are so deep and true that the whole State is indeed the counterpart of the

body, wherein an injury to any member is felt at once throughout the organism.

This, then, is the necessary community of husbands and wives and children which is implied in our ordinance that our Auxiliaries and Guardians shall have all things in common. It is only ordained for these two classes : but then, if the members of this class are free from internal dissensions, there is no danger " that the rest of the citizens will quarrel either with them or with one another."

Socrates proceeds to add some details about the conduct to be observed by these male and female Auxiliaries when they go out to war, and about the attitude which the State will adopt towards its enemies, when he is pulled up by his hearers, and compelled to face the question of the possibility of realising this ideal social community. But before we follow the argument further, we must try to make clear the real significance of the two startling " communistic " proposals just described.

We may note, first, that both proposals, considered as suggestions of *social* change, are absolutely opposed to the thought and attitude of the world in which Plato lived, and must have seemed far more outrageous to his contemporaries than they do to us. For in our case, recent upheavals of fixed habits of thought, accompanied by remarkable changes in the occupational life of our people, have accustomed us to the idea of community of pursuits for both sexes ; and still more recent developments of what may be called the eugenic attitude in social reform have at any rate familiarised us with proposals for radical alterations of our views and customs in regard to marriage. But this was not the case in Plato's day[1]—a fact which makes such suggestions all the more astonishing, especially in the mouth of a rather conservative and very anti-democratic Athenian. Moreover, though we are now quite inclined to discuss seriously proposals for change which, two or three generations ago, would have been dismissed as impious and insane, even we are seldom called upon to consider anything quite so wild as Plato's two proposals. He seems to have gone out of his way to make them as fantastic

[1] At any rate, only to a small extent. Educated Athenians had, of course, heard of such things as community of wives and of pursuits for women and men. And Aristophanes had already satirised the notion of admitting women to political power. But these were not familiar proposals seriously discussed, as they are among us to-day.

as possible ; the community of husbands and wives is particularly grotesque, and is accompanied, in the text, by details whose crudity outdoes any suggestions of the very crudest eugenist of to-day. And to all this we must add the fact that he does not even take the trouble to make his proposal workable. The extreme eugenist at the present time is faced by exactly the same difficulty which Plato notices—the tremendous difficulty of changing an old and hallowed institution without injuring its sanctity. But the most desperate eugenist has never suggested anything quite so ludicrous as a scheme by which the educated classes should be permanently hoodwinked—by themselves !

In the second place, Plato's proposal to abolish marriage and the monogamous family is really anti-moral in a very deep sense. We feel instinctively that it is both dangerous and wrong ; and this summary verdict of ours rests upon something far deeper than prejudice, and has a validity which is hardly affected at all by any considerations, however weighty, of eugenic progress or racial health. For the truth about all our social and moral ordinances seems to be this. It is almost certain that they come to be what they are—certain definite forms of strict regulation of social conduct—because the instinct of society has felt that they best serve the ends of social well-being. So much may be frankly admitted ; and we may admit, therefore, that utility, or the satisfaction of our human wants and needs, is the end to which, as particular ordinances, they are relative. We may say boldly that almost every item of our moral code, every bit of the fabric of social institutions which regulate right conduct, is the result of the pressure of environment, of our felt needs in relation to the environment, and of our interpretation of those needs and that environment. I mean by this that the form and content of each law and ordinance have been dictated by circumstances. Thus, to take the ordinances regulating our sex relations, monogamy is the rule which we must obey, and any infringement is bad and wrong. But this rule of monogamy has no special virtue of its own—apart from its relation to existing social circumstances. A strictly ordered polygamy or polyandry would be better and more right—in different circumstances ; if, for instance, the females or the males naturally outnumbered the other sex in the proportion of three to one, then our marriage ordinance would doubtless have been one enjoining three wives

to one husband or three husbands to one wife ; and good or moral conduct would have consisted in obeying such an ordinance and holding it sacred. But when the ordinance or institution has once become established, and is received as part of a moral code, the basis of social utility or of relation to circumstances is superseded. The ordinance acquires a real *ethical* value—quite apart from its social-utility value—in proportion as we come to regard it in relation to the supreme ethical purpose, that is, the discipline of our desires for the sake of a good end ; and this good end is no longer social well-being, but something much nearer to a spiritual end : let us say, the preparation of our souls and those of all our neighbours, by the discipline of mutual restraint and unselfishness and consideration for others, for the ultimate attainment of spiritual life. Now when any ordinance has reached this level, has become for us a centre and focus of effort towards the good, then we may say that its value rests upon a higher level than that of utility. It is not to be judged by any standard of social welfare or progress as commonly understood, for the tests of its worth lie wholly in our attitude to it, in our regard for it. And so long as that attitude and that regard (on the part of most " good " people) are of the true ethical character I have indicated, so long the ordinance is really supremely important.

I may be wrong, and some extreme eugenist right, as to the utility-value of our strict monogamous family, in relation to the strength of the race or the physical well-being of society. It is possible that this particular ordinance requires some alteration to adapt it better to present social needs. But the paramount considerations of ethical progress demand that it shall *not* be altered if, and so long as, the ethical respect of most good people is strongly attached to it : so long, that is, as it really possesses the true ethical quality. This does not commit us to a dangerous conservatism in reference to all our long-established moral ordinances, for there is no doubt that our ethical sentiment for any ordinance does grow weaker when its utility-value diminishes in consequence of change of circumstance and change of aim. The impatient reformer may object that the sentiment lingers on too long ; and this may be true. Good people are doubtless rather obstinate, and continue to respect an ordinance even when it has become effete. But the important point to remember is

that this quality of ethical respect for a restraining ordinance is itself the morally valuable thing, *not* the effects which may accrue in relation to social welfare. Consequently, even when the respect is attached to an ordinance whose utility is waning, its preservation is of more value to human progress than any consideration of greater utility. Put quite bluntly, it is far better to go on with a faulty ordinance which we regard as ethically good than to take a new and better-adapted ordinance which we are not yet prepared to endow with the true quality of ethical value.

Now Plato knew all this perfectly well. He knew that even a very defective ordinance cannot be put aside—cannot be regarded as anything but ethically right—so long as it is really venerated by good people. And yet he proposes to sweep away the one ordinance to which, more than to any other, the veneration of good people is attached. What does he mean ? Can it be the case that he is really requesting us, not playfully nor casually, but with all seriousness and in the very centre of his greatest work, to accept as his final vision of a perfect social life one in which the most fundamental and the most valuable of all human institutions—marriage and the family—are thrown aside in favour of an unpleasantly animal arrangement for the continuance of the breed ? Such a conclusion jars upon us : it seems unreasonable and improbable ; and if any other interpretation of this part of the book is possible we would gladly accept it.

I think a very different interpretation *is* possible. In the first place, we must be careful to remember that, in these central books of the *Republic*, Plato is legislating, not for human society as we know it or ever will know it, but for the perfect social state which (as he tells us later) can never be realised for ordinary human life. The reader must constantly bear in mind the fact that Plato is *not* now sketching the outlines of a social Utopia as we understand it ; so far as the ordinances upon which he here insists have any *social* application, they apply only to a society of really righteous souls, all living for the sake of the spiritual life, and for nothing else whatever. They are not ordained for any humanly possible society—even the best conceivable.[1] And the " ideal society " to which they are applicable

[1] This is made clear later. It may be noted here that the conditions described in the central books of the *Republic* are *not* introduced as conditions of the best *practicable* social state described in Plato's chief social work—the Laws.

will be entirely free from those estimates and sentiments which form the groundwork of social morality for us. It will be composed only of " unspoilt " souls, for whom the canvas of life has been swept clean of all existing habits of thought and feeling, both social and moral. And so the ground is cut from under the objections which we raise to his proposal for community of wives and husbands and children. The proposal would indeed involve serious ethical loss *for us ;* but what has that to do with a society of souls quite free from our equipment of ethical sentiment, and possessing instead a far higher equipment, as well as a far purer character ? This is the first answer to the criticisms which we naturally make upon Plato's communistic proposals. We cannot help criticising them—with an eye upon the human society we know, and with our thought fixed upon a possible " best state " for it. Plato would have a right to laugh at such criticisms. They simply have no meaning in relation to the unworldly, purified, wisdom-inspired society of which he is thinking.

In the second place, though I am far from asserting that the " social analogy " has no serious intention as a social picture, I must again remind the reader that its chief purpose is to make clear the necessary conditions of righteousness for the individual soul. Plato's Ideal State—which can never exist—is the large-scale pattern of the perfected individual soul—which can exist ; and all its features are the essential characteristics of the individual soul, " writ large " in a social form. To reach his meaning, therefore, we have to ask this question : what individual characteristics do these strange social ordinances represent ? And the answer to the question explains fully, not only the proposal of community of husbands and wives and children, but the community of pursuits as well.

Plato is now providing for the final purification of the soul already habituated to goodness, in order that it may be prepared to begin the ascent to the upper path. Now there are four qualities or conditions which mark the purged soul :[1] we

[1] The full " retinue of virtues " requisite for the pursuit of wisdom contains, of course, much more than these four. It is given very completely in the *Gita*, Book XIII, in a passage which Plato might have had constantly before him. In this, the first of the four groups of qualities covers all the results of the early education of the soul. The other three groups correspond exactly to the higher virtues of chastity, non-attachment, and one-pointedness. Poverty is included

may call them—following the language of the Vedas—poverty, chastity, non-attachment and one-pointedness. These are the last conditions of the freedom to which the good soul must attain. They imply rather more than the terms suggest to us. Poverty is not merely absence of wealth of any kind, but indifference to possessions of any sort whatever: freedom from the obsession of the possessive case, as it has been called. Chastity is not merely purity in act and thought, but a condition of real indifference to sex. The soul that has learned chastity will not notice distinction of sex at all; every being becomes for it sexless, even as the supreme Spirit is sexless. He or she learns to see, in every woman and every man, not the flesh wherein sex resides, but only the spirit for which sex has no meaning. Non-attachment is harder to explain; it, too, implies indifference, whether in regard to persons or to things. But the word "indifference" is here peculiarly misleading. We may say, perhaps, that, just as chastity does not mean a perpetual crucifixion of the flesh, but a condition in which desire is so completely conquered that there is no more "flesh" to be crucified; so non-attachment does not mean any strained desertion of family or friends or interests, but simply the power to live with them and love them without any thought of self, without any clinging to the conception of them as "mine," without any fear lest "I" may lose them. The condition of one-pointedness will be more fully explained later; it will be enough here to note that it is the paramount condition of the unity or singleness of heart and aim and purpose which is the final mark of the righteous soul.

Now Plato has already provided for the first of these four

by implication only: it is explicitly enjoined elsewhere. Here is the passage referred to:

"Humbleness, truthfulness, and harmlessness,
Patience and honour, reverence for the wise.
Purity, constancy, control of self,
Contempt of sense-delights, self-sacrifice, . . .
Detachment, lightly holding unto home,
Children and wife, and all that bindeth men;
An ever-tranquil heart in fortunes good
And fortunes evil, with a will set firm
To worship Me—Me only! ceasing not;
Loving all solitudes, and shunning noise
Of foolish crowds; endeavours resolute
To reach perception of the Utmost Soul,
And grace to understand what gain it were
So to attain—this is true Wisdom, Prince!
And what is otherwise is ignorance."

conditions—poverty, and has presented it without any difficulty in a social form, as the ordinance that the Guardian class in the State must not only own and seek no wealth, but must be free from possessions of any kind, aloof from all wealth-making, and unpolluted by the touch of silver or gold. But the other three conditions are much harder to deal with. They are at once harder for Plato to present in a social form, and harder for us to accept as necessary conditions of the good life in any form. Plato has sound reason for fearing that each one of the three will be opposed by "great waves" of vehement dissent; our human nature and our worldly interests alike drive us forward in waves of opposition against such incredibly austere conditions. Yet they are necessary, and the opposition must be faced. So Plato boldly puts them in, and "writes them large" in the social letters. The community of pursuits for women and men, and their essential equality,[1] represent the true sexlessness of the soul in relation to its true life, and the freedom from thought of sex which is the condition of entrance to the upper path. Plato wishes to make it clear that women as well as men can reach that excellence of character which the Guardians typify, and can therefore advance, just as men can, to that far higher state which the Philosopher represents. In a later passage he is very careful to correct Glaucon, when he admits that Socrates has "perfected the leading men in a style of faultless beauty," by the remark—"Yes, and the leading women too, Glaucon. For do not suppose that what I say is intended to apply at all more to men than to women, so long as we can find women whose talents are equal to the work." This, of course, is necessarily the case, since the soul itself is sexless, and, in each human life, sex is but an accident of its earthly nature. And, in the preparation for the higher path, men and women alike must learn to free their minds utterly from the vast mass of prejudices and preoccupations which the thought of sex involves, and so become capable of regarding one another only as souls. And this is the root idea of chastity.

[1] Let it not be imagined that Plato is an advocate for equality of the sexes in a political or social sense. He is thinking of nothing of the kind. He was no advocate of "women's rights": his political or social feeling in that matter comes out plainly in the eighth book, where he speaks of equality of women as one of the marks of a thoroughly evil and degenerate society. He was very conservative—in politics.

Similarly, the community of wives and husbands and children —the cause of the second great wave of opposition—is the social expression of the condition of non-attachment which involves freedom from closely binding ties of personal feeling. This is made clear by his emphatic and repeated assertions that the real purpose of the family communism is to obliterate the strong sense of " mine " which the individualist family generates in its members. Herein lies the core of the religious doctrine of non-attachment. The soul *must* learn to lay aside the personal interest, the *self*-interest, in even the most exquisite ties of human devotion : that is the hardest condition of its freedom. To us in the West this is a peculiarly difficult doctrine, perhaps because our ordinary conception of religion has travelled such a little way beyond that of " morality touched with emotion " or earthly goodness glowing with human devotion. To most of us, heaven will not be heaven unless we have our loved ones with us—*ours* as on earth, and loved by us as on earth. It is a creditable but rather crude conception. For in heaven there is no husband or wife, son or daughter, brother or sister. In the form in which we know them, all these relationships disappear. Our " loved ones " must become holy, just as we must ; they must become divine, just as we must ; and in the oneness of divinity all ties are transcended, even as in the preparation for it they are transmuted. We shall not cease to love ; rather we must learn to love much more intensely. But there must be no more trace of self or of the separateness which belongs to our human affections. Our love must become universalised, given in equal measure to all.

The fourth and last condition, of one-pointedness and all that this implies, is provided for by the final ordinance, that the whole social life must be under the rule of the philosopher. This, the greatest of all the " paradoxes," and the cause of the greatest wave of dissent, is the theme of the sixth and seventh books, and the discussion of it must be deferred.

Now, if this interpretation is right, then our criticism of the various social ordinances is beside the point, and the only pertinent criticisms are those directed against the description of the good individual life which the social picture suggests. It is not necessary here to criticise the essential conditions themselves upon which Plato insists. Poverty, chastity, non-attachment—

are not these the universal conditions which the highest religion everywhere demands ? We may dislike them very vehemently ; we may say—with most commentators, even the Christian commentators—that we would not like to live in Plato's ideal State : it is too cold and austere. But, in saying so, we are criticising, not Plato's ordinances, but the injunctions of all pure religion. Of this, more must be said later. The objection that we " do not like " to leave father and mother, husband or wife, in order to seek God, raises questions which need not be discussed here. At this point my only concern is to show that we miss Plato's meaning very completely if we interpret and criticise the three so-called paradoxes of the fifth book as the fantastic ordinances of a social Utopia.

A different criticism is, however, both legitimate and necessary. Plato is quite in line with the religious teaching of East and West in insisting that the purged soul must become free from the obsession of sex interest, and from the close personal ties of absorbing family affections. But the method which he advocates is certainly not in line with the Eastern teaching, whose main principles he adopts. There is (he says in effect) too much self-centred attachment, too much sense of personal possession, in married life and the family : then let the righteous soul be kept away from both—have nothing to do with them, in fact. But is not this rather like cutting down a valuable tree for fear lest some of its fruit may become a danger if allowed to hang too long ? The old Indian teaching points to a far saner method : to let all the fruit grow and ripen and serve its purpose of enriching our life and perfecting our experience before we pass on to a state in which tree and fruit alike are left behind. Plato cuts at the root of the family affections, of close personal ties between husband and wife, parents and children, because these may stand in the way of the universal spiritual brotherhood which the rising soul must enter, in which there shall be no marrying nor giving in marriage. Far better, surely, to let all these best human affections and ties grow to their greatest strength, and then melt away in the transformation of that very love whose lower form they have helped to bring to perfection. Far better to let the natural discipline of social life have its full effect, so that the final purging of the soul may come as a safe and gradual process, a veritable weaning away from the ties and absorptions

which are not bad but wholly good—in their place on the " lower path."

Similarly, we have a right to say that Plato is wrong in trying to wipe out of our life the whole field of strong attachments. In the life of this world we cannot have too much attachment ; the great defect is having too little. I do not mean interests merely : they are the substitute offered by cold-blooded people. I mean real, intimate loves for people and things—the kind of attachment which a child has for the particular toy that it " loves to sleep," or the doll with whom it shares its secrets. *That* is the kind of feeling we ought to have for hosts of nature's creatures—flowers and trees and animals and corners in the rocks and sunsets, to say nothing of our human fellow-creatures. There is plenty of self in it, of course ; but it is self at its best, going out in a kind of happy fellowship with others. There is no surer preparation than this for the higher state of love in which the soul has no more need of a centre of self to which all feeling must return. But it must be regarded as a preparation. Our danger is to think that it is an end in itself, a condition which is good because the feeling and appreciation involved in it are so intense. That is one of the peculiar dangers which beset very artistic natures—as Plato realised. And this condition of attachment is only good in the transitory sense which may be applied to any part of our earthly life : it is *not* good in the sense in which the word must be used with reference to the path of reality.

Would not Plato, lover, poet and artist as he was, have admitted the force of these criticisms ? Undoubtedly ; but his answer to them would have been very simple. " All that you say about the discipline of human ties and the necessary experience of strong attachments is true—for all normal natures. But, as I tell you again and again, I am only concerned with those very rare characters who, from their youth up, show clearly that they are naturally fitted for the ' higher life.' They will not need the slow discipline and experience which are so necessary for us ; let them then follow the more direct road to the Good which I am describing." We may still criticise the road described, and call it dangerous, if we like. But the only criticism left to us is one which applies with equal force to the practice of the Christian Church (in most countries and in most centuries), whereby those who are deemed fit for the religious life are, like Plato's little

band of golden natures, kept away from the close ties of marriage and family life and worldly interests, bound, even in youth, to those ideals of poverty, chastity and non-attachment which Plato's ideal state embodies.

We may pass on now to the last of the three strange ordinances, the one which will arouse the greatest wave of opposition, the one, nevertheless, upon which rests the very possibility of ever making real the ideal state. Socrates is asked by his hearers " to leave his loitering " over the details of his perfect community, and to answer the question, Is such a State possible ? And if so, how ? Let me remind you, Socrates replies, that even if it is not a possibility, it will be none the worse as an ideal. But in fact there is one condition, and only one, by which its realisation may be secured. It is this : " Unless philosophers become kings, or the rulers of this world acquire the spirit and power of philosophy, there will be no deliverance for societies, no, nor for the human race, as I believe ; and only on this condition will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day. . . . "

To the full explanation of this final condition the whole of the sixth and seventh books of the *Republic* are devoted. We may, however, gain a preliminary grasp of its meaning by putting together some of the various forms in which the proposal is expressed by Plato. In addition to the one just given, they are as follows :

" No State or constitution or individual either can ever become perfect until the few existing philosophers are, by some accident, compelled to accept the charge of a State, which in turn finds itself compelled to be obedient to them."

If any philosopher can be found, and then compelled to undertake the task of making a State perfect, " he will take for his canvas a State and the moral nature of mankind, and will begin by making a clean surface of it."

This is further explained by saying that the first step will be " to despatch into the country all in the State who are above ten years of age ; and then to bring up the children away from the influence of that common character which their parents and others possess, in the manners and laws of the true philosopher."

And by a philosopher is meant " a spirit full of lofty thoughts, and privileged to be a spectator of all time and all existence, who cannot possibly attach any importance to this life."

Moreover, " no existing State is a worthy sphere for a philosophic nature. The latter must find the most perfect constitution, answering to itself as the most perfect character ; and it will then give proof that it is the true divine type, whereas all other kinds of character and of vocation are merely human."

" Such a perfect constitution is the one we have sketched, but with one addition : that there must be constantly present some authority that will view the constitution in the very light in which we, the legislators, viewed it when we framed the laws."

I put these quotations together in order to support or give point to an assertion which, for the present, I must make dogmatically. It is thus : that the whole gist of the *Republic* lies in the statement that human society and the individual human soul can be delivered or saved on one condition only ; and the condition is that Philosophy must be made their absolute lord and master. This is put as the final condition of the realisation of the ideal State whose outlines have been sketched. But it is not a question of realising the social features of that or any other Utopia, though we may say, if we like, that it has to do with the realising and making perfect in any society those social virtues which the ideal State contains. But a deeper and vaster question than this is at stake. Plato is now trying to tell in what way the soul, or any society of souls, can be saved. And this is his answer : they must first prepare themselves for, and then accept utterly, the authority of the only true guide and king —the " philosopher." The picture of the ideal State is an explanation of the necessary mode of preparation, and of the condition which the individual or the society must first attain ; the central books give the explanation of the true guidance and kingship, the meaning of philosophy and the philosopher. Salvation is possible for all. But only one or two individuals here and there can attain to it ; and of societies, none, unless they can literally be born again, " the canvas wiped clean " of all the marks of worldliness which make up the character of any existing society.

And this magical philosophy, what is it ? The answer is given at length in the sixth and seventh books. We may summarise it here in a single word. The human soul and human society can find deliverance only under the kingship of Religion.

## CHAPTER VI

### AN EXPLANATORY CHAPTER CONCERNING THE CONCEPTION OF THE UPPER PATH OR PATH OF RELIGION.

WE must now return to the Indian conception of the life of the soul, in order to explain the central books of the *Republic* which form the real kernel of the whole work (Book V, p. 474 to the end of Book VII). In Chapter II we saw that the Dharma or Righteousness of the Path of Pursuit might be regarded as the religion, as well as the perfection, of that path, for it signifies the attainment, in obedience to divine law, of the highest human excellence; the performance, in a spirit of submission to a supreme authority, of the full duties of human life; the development of all the best powers and attributes of the human personality; and the realisation, through humility and worship, of the most perfect condition of the soul of which the human being, as such, is capable. But, on this path, the soul is not free; it is "under the law"; it must accept and obey the guidance revealed to it. Its life is conditioned also by the "qualities" which run through the whole of the material universe, the principles which appear as inertia, motion and equilibrium in that part of nature which we regard as unconscious, and as the attachment of desire, the restlessness of passion and emotion, and the steadfastness of well-balanced character, when we consider them in relation to human life. This last quality, at its best, appears to us to be perfect. But it is *not* perfect. Its equilibrium of moral steadfastness is not a stable equilibrium. It is still liable to be overthrown by gusts of passion or desire, and shaken by doubts. It represents the excellence of the man who is religious—in the ordinary sense: one who orders his conduct in accordance with the commandments which he believes to be from God; who humbles himself in worship before the divinity which he cannot see but accepts in faith; who sets his

face towards a horizon beyond which he believes there shines the eternal Sun of Righteousness, though the clouds of earth hide it from him ; who, learning the laws of nature, is willing to believe that they are also the laws of God, though they are often difficult to reconcile with what his reason tells him ought to be the laws of love ; and who, finally, holds his soul in readiness for a fuller revelation and a final transformation to a higher state of being.

Such a " religious " man is, as the Vedas say, very near to the knowledge of God. But the veil of ignorance is not yet drawn aside. He must still walk by the faculty of belief, not of full knowledge : the realities among which he lives are not yet the true realities.

Moreover, in the case of most of us who are living on the Path of Pursuit, there is not much difficulty in admitting that, just as we fall very far short of the excellence of the good man, so we are very far removed indeed from the knowledge of God. We may be " religious," making honest if fitful attempts to worship the God revealed to us, and to order our doings in harmony with the given law. But the interests which we accept as real are quite frankly those of this changing world, just as the science which we accept as important is the knowledge of the phenomenal universe. Our religion is like a steadying strand which runs through *some* of our activities, giving them just enough connection with a possible reality to save them from utter meaninglessness.

Now the Eastern conception of a higher arc of life, differing entirely from the Path of Pursuit, necessarily carries with it a conception of a higher form of Dharma or Righteousness, and a higher form of Religion. This may also be described as a form of attainment, performance, development and realisation ; but the excellence to be attained, the functions to be performed, the powers to be developed, and the condition to be realised, far transcend those of the lower path. If we must use a single phrase to describe this Religion, we may call it the realisation of the divine nature of the soul, but only on the understanding that this includes the recognition of its unity with the divine spirit of all the world. And with this recognition comes perfect freedom ; the spirit that knows itself to be one with the universal spirit is no longer " under the law," for bondage and submission disappear in the consciousness of unity of will with the source of all law, and the full perception of the purpose behind the law.

The conditions of this realisation of the divine within us and without are, first, the complete purification of the soul which alone makes liberation possible ; and then the uprising of the true spiritual faculty within the soul into the world of spiritual reality which it alone can find. This passage of the spirit from darkness into light is most easily conceived as its entrance into the realm of true knowledge and true discernment. The spiritual faculty alone can make this entrance, and only when the soul which holds it has been refined into the most transparent purity, and educated up to the very threshold of spiritual knowledge. For the spiritual or real world can only be discerned by the faculty which is in its nature kin with it—a faculty which transcends those by which we learn and " know " and act in the phenomenal world.

It now becomes clear why the Religion of the upper path is universally called " wisdom," or more fully, the knowledge of the spirit. Gnana and Adyatmavidya are the Sanskrit terms, the first denoting a wisdom totally different from the knowledge or science which the world calls wisdom, the latter denoting that wisdom applied to its true object—the Spirit. And this latter term—literally, knowledge of the Atman or Spirit within oneself —points to exactly the same path of wisdom as that indicated by the Greek sage's famous command, " Gnôthi Seauton," or " Know thyself," which we may expand into the form, " Discover thy real spirit, and so find the key to all reality." For the Atman is simply the spiritual kernel of the soul, the spark of divinity within us which is essentially one with the Sun of Good, and can " reveal all things to the man " if only he can set it free to function as the knower of all reality. It is as different from mind or reason (the Manas of the Sanskrit and the Logistikon of the Greek) as these are different from unconscious matter. It is the real or immortal principle within us—potentially omniscient, the veritable spectator of all time and all existence, the source of all true power, the one and final witness, for those who find it, of our kinship with God.

" For those who find it " : since its existence and power alike are hidden from us so long as we are of the world, worldly : it can be known only to those who reach the high level of pure religion and undefiled. But, though we speak of it as a hidden power, we have no need to bring in any such misleading terms

as occult or mysterious. Occultism and mystery have no place on the path which leads to the great realisation ; but the road is hard and long, and the goal so far beyond our human vision that any description seems mystical and unreal.

Now to this spiritual psychology there, of course, corresponds a spiritual ontology. That is to say, answering to the faculty of real knowledge or wisdom, there is a real world which it alone can know. And the nature of this reality, though never capable of description in terms which we can understand, is indicated in this way : The supreme Spirit, or Para-Brahm, is the one God, in whom is all consciousness, all existence, all will. Side by side with Him there is what may be called, according to our point of view, either Nothingness or Matter—that which is not anything by itself, but is the potential matter or staff of all manifested or created forms. It is called, in the Sanskrit, Prakriti. By the act of creation or self-manifestation, God breathes His spirit into this matter, and thus calls into existence the manifested universe, in which every imaginable form may appear. But the universe so created is not real as God is real : it is, as it were, a compound of reality and nothingness, of divine spirit and matter, subject always to the law of incessant change, of evolution and involution, of folding out and folding back again, of becoming and ceasing to be. It is the phenomenal universe—all that can be manifest to the faculties with which we or others, as part of it, can feel or see or know. And—again by comparison with the true reality—this whole universe of changing forms may be called illusion (Maya in the Sanskrit), because it is mixed with the Nothingness which is the source of all illusion. But behind these changing, illusory forms, these shadows of reality, there is present also the divine spirit—in every atom, in every lowliest creature, just as much as in man and the beings who are higher than man.[1] They are all, therefore, parts of the one divinity, but all in greater or less degree immersed in matter, and, so far as this phenomenal existence goes, subject to the taint of change and decay which matter brings with it. Consequently, we must regard *all* created beings, from the stones up to the angels and

[1] "God sleeps in the mineral world, dreams in the vegetable world, wakes in the animal world, wakes to self-consciousness in the human world, and wakes to divine consciousness in the spiritual world," is an Eastern (though not an Indian) mode of expressing this universality of the divine spirit.

the great Gods, as belonging to the region in which, as Plato says, " everything roams about midway between Reality and Nothingness " ; for all are bound, by their fusion with matter and its illusion, to the Unreal, even though all are bound, by the divinity which is in them, to the supreme Reality. And this " relativity " belongs, not merely to facts and our knowledge of facts, but to all our human faculties and their work, and even to our souls. For the soul is not itself pure spirit : it is the habitation in which the spirit dwells ; and though it is called immortal (in the sense of age-long, or deathless so long as the manifested universe endures), it is not eternal (in the sense of being beyond and above time and change). To the Atman or spirit within the soul alone belongs the eternity which is God's.

The whole process of manifestation of created forms is conceived as a process of evolution and involution. Its duration is God's day. It begins with brightest sunlight, passes on to cloud and shadow, then to twilight and to deepest night, and then on again through dawn to brightest sunlight again. That is to say, in the process of evolution, every particle of the divine reality becomes clothed with more and more complex forms—is more and more deeply immersed in matter ; and in the process of involution, the forms are again little by little thrown off, until the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Moreover, this universal process of evolution and involution, of unfolding into manifold forms and again returning to a spiritual simplicity, is reflected, as it were, in the normal life of every soul. Throughout the chain of lives[1] which it lives, there runs the same order—discernible also in the case of a single life. First, the simple and undifferentiated ; then increasing complexity and differentiation, accompanied by increase of interests and ties, desires and tastes ; then again the return to the simple—but on a different level. For at the beginning the simplicity resembles the quiet of dreamless sleep ; at the close, the quiet of intent wakefulness. The manifold complexity which lies between these two states appears to us at first as the means for the progressive

[1] This chain of lives is explained later, when the subject of Reincarnation is dealt with. It may be noted here that, in the present evolutionary process, our world has (according to Hindu doctrine) reached the twilight period of immersion in matter, but has a still darker period before it, in which our difficulties and complexities must increase. The close similarity of Plato's conception of the evolution of the universe is discussed in a later chapter.

development of our powers and the enriching of our experience : that is why it is called the great illusion. The worldly soul calls this manifold *good*, and makes it more, and endlessly more, in the belief that it is carrying him to some goal. The religious soul sees that it is *necessary*, since experience and trial must come before awakening ; but *good* he knows it cannot be, except in the sense in which one might call good the waves through which he must pass to reach the land, or the stone which he must shape to build his house, or the darkness which makes brighter the succeeding dawn.

And in the life of human society the same order holds : from simple to complex and then onward to simple again. But with this difference : society is not a *being* at all, but only a number of beings so arranged as to form a special environment for one another. And when we say that the law holds good for society, as for the individual, we mean merely that it holds good in a special way for individuals who are conditioned by the social environment. For while that environment obviously increases the complexity of our experience and our opportunities of learning its lessons, it also intensifies each one's tendency to regard that complexity as valuable in itself. And so it comes about that society may become the greatest sorcerer and the nurse of our worst illusions. For to increase of complexity and of variety it gives the name of progress, and the name of well-being to multiplicity of satisfactions ; thus reinforcing the natural illusion from which its individual members suffer—the illusion of imagining that because they are getting more they are therefore getting on.

This condition of idolised complexity is what the scriptures of the East refer to as " mixture of the qualities, and of the social functioning corresponding to them "—a condition always described as anarchy, from which neither society nor individuals can be saved until they find the religion which is also wisdom, or the true discernment which is also the knowledge of God.

## CHAPTER VII

ANALYSIS OF THE *REPUBLIC*, BOOK V (PART) AND BOOK VI (PART). THE MEANING OF PHILOSOPHY, OR WISDOM-RELIGION; AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHILOSOPHER OR SEER.

WE may now return to Plato's dialogue, taking up the argument again at the point at which he makes his famous declaration, that there can be no salvation for human society or human souls until their activities are ruled by Religion, or the knowledge of spiritual reality. These are not the terms which Plato uses. The Greeks had no word for Religion; we have so many meanings for the word that it is hard to use it without almost certain misunderstanding. Plato uses the term "philosophy," which meant rather more to the Greeks than it does to us, inasmuch as its etymological meaning, "love of wisdom," was patent to them. But even to the Greeks, and far more to us, the word had gathered round it sundry associations which did anything but add to one's respect for it. To be called a "philosopher" was equivalent to being called a rather useless dreamer who entangled his mind in the webs of endless speculations about the unknown and the unknowable. Plato boldly adopted this term to describe the man who alone could guide his own soul or the souls of others into the haven of peace and certainty, of Righteousness and illumination. And, as his argument proceeds, it becomes clear that he needs a word which neither his language nor ours possesses —a word which shall connote at once the attributes of sage and saint and seer. In the Sanskrit these attributes *are* united in the word "Muni";[1] and this would serve as a translation of Plato's word "philosopher," as the latter is made to appear when the description is complete. But, in the long exposition

[1] Literally, "the silent one"; because he can never express in words what he has seen.

in which Plato strives to make clear what he intends the " philosopher " to represent, many of the arguments hinge upon the double meaning of the word—its literal meaning of " a lover of wisdom," and its universally acquired meaning of " a useless speculator and dreamer." It is advisable, therefore, to keep to Plato's terms, only substituting the word " seer " for " philosopher," and " true knowledge of reality " for " philosophy," when these meanings are clearly required by the context.

Plato's first step[1] towards the justification of his daring assertion is to explain that the true philosopher is one who cares for absolute realities only, as distinguished from the counterfeit philosophers, who devote their attention to the quasi-realities belonging to the changing phenomenal world. A simple example is used to make this distinction plain. There are many people who devote themselves to the study of the beautiful in all its forms, and imagine that they are dealing with the philosophy of beauty. But unless they have reached the absolute beauty which is the spirit of all beautiful things, they are not philosophers at all. They have not found true knowledge of reality, but only opinion relating to reflections of reality. For in reference to " knowledge " and " knowing " there are three possible grades or conditions : total ignorance ; partial knowledge, with belief in its adequacy ; and true or complete knowledge. Each of these has a totally distinct province. The province of ignorance is nothing, or the region of the non-existent ; for if a man can only say " I know not," he is so far in contact only with nothingness. The province of the second condition is the world of phenomena, of changing and impermanent copies of reality ; for the man who says, " This seems to me to be the case ; I am convinced of this by observation of phenomena," has not yet touched reality, but is in contact only with a world which lies midway between the non-existent and the absolutely existent. But the province of the third and highest condition is the world of true reality ; for he who can say " I know," without any shadow of hypothesis or doubt, he alone is in contact with the absolutely real and the eternally existent.

The very faculty used in this last condition is quite different from those used in the second. The man who *knows* does so by the use of a faculty which can only function in relation to abso-

[1] The analysis which follows is from Book V, p. 474 to Book VI, p. 502.

lute realities ; the man who *thinks he knows* uses faculties which can function in the phenomenal world, but in that only. *These* latter are the faculties to whose use alone the vast majority of men are awake ; and therefore the only world they touch is the one in which our conceptions about goodness or beauty or any thing else "roam about, as it were, in an uncertain region midway between the really existent and the really non-existent." However high their attainments, however deep their researches, *we* will not call them philosophical, but rather philodoxical, or lovers of what *appears* to be true.

This then is the difference between those who are true philosophers and those who are not. Can there be much doubt which of the two ought to have the guidance of a State ? The former are able to apprehend the eternal and immutable ; the latter wander perpetually in the region of change and multiformity. The former have the light of perfect truth in their souls, for an infallible guide in all their dealings with earthly standards of beauty and goodness ; the latter walk in the darkness of error, blind of soul, with no ray of truth to lighten their path.

You must remember, too, that the former have the qualification of a more easily discernible excellence. Their characters are marked by hatred of falsehood in any shape or form, by desires so strongly set in the direction of knowledge that they cannot wander in the direction of pleasure or profit ; free, therefore, from all meanness and covetousness, from all anger and sloth, from all fear, even of death itself, from all attachment to life and the interests of the world. Add to the philosopher this retinue of virtues, and then answer me again : Is he or is he not the man to whom the sole management of affairs should be entrusted ?

At this point the argument is interrupted by Adeimantus. "This is all very well, Socrates. You have led us on, by insensible degrees, to a conclusion which seems inevitable, and its opposite palpably absurd. But when I turn away from your seductive words, and look at the world as I know it, I do not feel convinced at all. For the philosophers whom one sees are not in the least what you describe. Many of them are no better than they should be ; the few whose characters are quite respectable appear to be so damaged by their pursuit of philosophy that they have

become both eccentric and useless to their country. Am I not right ? "

You are perfectly right, replies Socrates, and the explanation of what you see is very simple. Imagine a ship whose captain is a much better seaman than any of the crew, but who is, nevertheless, not very efficient—rather deaf, rather short-sighted, rather wanting in nautical skill. But the crew will not allow that he is in any way their superior ; so they put him in irons, and themselves, or some faction among them, take possession of the vessel, letting it drift hither and thither while they eat and drink and make merry, and giving the title of pilot or skilled navigator to anyone who helps them to get what they want. On such a ship, with such a crew, will not the true captain or pilot be called a useless, star-gazing babbler ? And is not this a perfectly true picture of all existing States ? No wonder, then, that when a philosopher does appear, he is useless to the world. But this is not the fault of the philosopher, but the fault of the world, with which the noblest of all callings is not likely to be in good repute when it is directly opposed to all its most cherished pursuits.

Moreover, the quest of wisdom has a bad name for another reason. You just now mentioned that most of its votaries are not even respectable people, but quite the reverse ; and I did not contradict you. It is just this that is the tragedy of philosophy—and the tragedy of so many fine natures. For consider once again what the true philosopher is. He is one who is veritably in love with wisdom, and with the reality to which it relates ; and, like every genuine lover, he cannot rest until he has won the object of his love. His whole soul is filled with this ; all his desires are fused into one, and focussed upon this ; no other object can attract him save this. And so, unsatisfied with the multitudinous variety of the world we see, " he presses on until he has grasped the nature of each thing as it really is, with that part of his soul whose function it is to grasp reality, in virtue of its affinity to it. And then, having, indeed, by means of this reached and mingled with real existence, he brings wisdom and truth into being, so that then, and not till then, he is wise, he enjoys true life, he receives true nourishment, and he is at last released from his travail pangs." But remember what we have found to be the conditions of such a love as this. There must

be absolute hatred of falsehood in all its forms ; and there must be an equipment of fine qualities besides, such as manliness, a lofty soul, a quick understanding and a good memory.

And just here lies the danger. Natures so equipped are rare ; and, alas ! the few there are are exposed to peculiar perils ; and the worst peril of all springs from their very excellence. This may seem strange to you ; but it is not really strange. For just as the finest seeds suffer the most if planted in a bad soil, so these finest natures, because they are the best, suffer most from a bad environment, becoming distorted into much more evil forms than weaker natures can be. And is it not the case that they *are* exposed to a bad environment, and planted among bad influences ? The world thinks they are corrupted by Sophists, or professional teachers whose doctrines are dangerous. But that is not the danger. It is the world itself which is the great corruptor ; it is the mass of people who are worldly who destroy these rare natures. For just think what are the standards of the world, and what its teaching is. By its rewards and penalties, by its praise or censure, it is incessantly crying out to us that our greatest virtue lies in pleasing it, in thinking as it thinks, in doing as it does, in seeking the ends which it seeks. And it is a powerful teacher, my friends ; for it can punish with death even as it can reward with the highest honours. Why, the very Sophists whom the world blames are only feeble imitators of the world itself, who have learned the great beast's whims and fancies, and call this learning wisdom ! Wisdom, indeed !—when neither they nor it ever reach anything higher than opinion, or changing notions about changing experiences. For the world cannot even tolerate the idea of reality as something absolutely opposed to the things it knows and enjoys ; and so the world cannot either care for or believe in wisdom ; but will go on condemning and punishing the real lover of wisdom to the end.

*Now* do you understand the danger the world holds out for the natures fit for philosophy ? Will not these, from their childhood up, be made the victims of their own fine qualities ? Will not the world try to mould them to its own uses, while their strong natures are still malleable—tempting them with flattery and praise and extravagant promises, in order to seduce them into harmony with its own aims ? So it comes to pass that most of them grow up, not lovers of wisdom at all, but lovers of world-

shams, and the very worst foes of philosophy. And this is what I meant by the tragedy of noble natures, by the ruin and corruption of the rare characters fitted to be wisdom's mates, religion's devotees. And then what happens? Why, when wisdom is thus left desolate and bereft of her proper followers, their place as suitors for her hand is usurped by a crowd of nobodies, besieging her like a mob of tinkers wooing a queen—base pretenders to a noble calling, spurious worshippers at a shrine which draws them to it only because they think its lustre will conceal their littleness. And thus the highest of all quests is degraded, and the noblest of all professions is dragged down and brought into evil repute.

But of those who are worthy to associate with philosophy just a very few escape the perils we have described, and remain faithful to her. These are they who, by some happy chance, avoid the glamour of a political career, and so escape the greatest temptation of a strong nature—the ambition to excel and win fame by pleasing the populace. Here is one who has had the good luck to be exiled from his country; here another who is fortunate in having been born a member of a very insignificant State; here another who has been blessed with the gift of ill-health, which acts as a kindly curb on his ambitions, as in the case of our friend Theages; while my own case affords an example, I think it must be a very rare one, of one who has been saved by the gift of an internal monitor, a divine restraining sign. Now when the members of this fortunate little band have tasted how sweet and blessed their treasure of wisdom is, and have seen the madness of the many, the blind unwisdom of the world, will they not withdraw within the shelter of their own thoughts, like lonely wayfarers sheltering behind a wall from the fury of the hurricane, quite content if they can live their life in the world unsullied by unrighteous deeds, until the time of their deliverance comes, and they can depart in serene hope and happiness? If they can do this, they will do well, you say. Ah yes; but not so well as if they had found a State whose constitution harmonised with their natures; for in that case they might have saved both their country and themselves, and given clear proof to men that their vocation is of the true divine type, whereas all other kinds are merely human. Such a State with such a constitution they would have found in the one we have sketched. But even that needs to be safeguarded still further. It will not serve unless there is in

it some authority to preserve inviolate the spirit and aim with which we designed it ; and, an even more vital matter, it must handle philosophy and educate the philosopher in a manner quite opposed to that now in vogue. For at present those who pursue philosophy are mere striplings who take it up in the intervals of other pursuits, dipping into the deepest part of it, dialectic, but gaining no sure insight into its depths, and losing, as their life in the world goes on, even the little they have gained. But we shall insist that, though in their youth they shall be trained in exercises suited to their age, with special care of their physical faculties, they shall not begin the deeper exercises till their minds are matured ; and finally, only when their active citizen life is over, shall they dedicate themselves to the quest of wisdom, and live out their lives consecrated to her service.

Sophists and others may mock at us for insisting upon such an arrangement ; but that is because they have never yet had a chance of seeing the utterly good man reigning in the utterly righteous State. The world cannot agree with us until it has such a witness before its eyes : that is why I dared to say that no State or constitution or individual can ever become perfect until somehow or other, at some time or other, a true philosopher finds himself accidentally compelled to take charge of a State which in turn finds itself accidentally compelled to obey him ; or until some reigning king becomes divinely inspired with a genuine passion for genuine wisdom. This is not likely to happen ; but who shall dare to say that it is impossible, at some far distant time or in some far off land ? And the world will agree with us then, when once it has got out of its mind the cause of its ill-will to philosophy—I mean, the examples of counterfeit philosophers who bring shame upon the love of wisdom. The world will agree with us then, when once it has realised how different are the true philosophers from those base copies : how impossible are disputes and bickerings about mundane matters to those whose thoughts are set upon the things that really exist ; and how their vision of the changeless God renders them unchanging and godlike too, sole masters of the power to make good on earth the similitudes of the heavenly goodness which they know ; when it sees all this, then surely the multitude will agree with us that deliverance is possible for all under the rule of such kings.

But how, you ask, are they to set about their task ? Well,

they must first get a clean canvas to work upon, that is, human society and the moral nature of man in a simple and pure form, cleansed of its bad habits and preoccupations. They will have to make the canvas clean by their own exertions, if they cannot find one ready to hand ; and then they will sketch in outline and fill up in detail as true a copy of the divine excellence as the conditions of human nature allow. And the picture produced will be good, for the archetype is perfect and the delineators as nearly perfect as the philosopher can be. And the worldly enemies whom we feared will, when they look upon it, lose their anger and range themselves on the side of our sure conviction that the realisation of such a picture in an earthly society is not impossible, though it may be very difficult, if only our great conditions are fulfilled—the appearance of a philosopher as a willing ruler over a society willing to submit to his rule. . . .

The pages I have summarised above form the first part of the central theme of the *Republic*, the explanation of the wisdom-religion to which Plato gives the name philosophy. In it the argument is concerned with four main points : first, the distinction between wisdom and all lower forms of knowing ; secondly, the distinction between real existence and all lower forms of being ; thirdly, the corresponding distinction between the philosopher or true finder of wisdom and all lower forms of human thinkers and knowers ; and fourthly, the opposition of the world and all that is worldly to the spirit and all that is spiritual. These four subjects, all forming part of the central theme, are dealt with not once but several times over, from different points of view. And it is to be noted that, with consummate art, all four subjects are presented as subordinate to what is paraded as the chief theme, namely, the attractive and interesting political question concerning the possibility of realising a State made perfect by the rule of philosophy. I say that this is paraded as the chief theme : we will consider later how far it is to be regarded as raising one of the vital issues of the book.

But first let us turn to the four main arguments, and examine them in order. The first and second must be taken together ; for it is clear that the consideration of the nature of wisdom and the consideration of the nature of real existence cannot properly be separated.

The preliminary distinction between ignorance, ordinary knowledge and true wisdom, with their correlatives, nothingness, the phenomenal world, and the real world, is in very close agreement with the conception (not, of course, peculiar to Hinduism) of a manifested or phenomenal universe compounded of, and lying midway between, chaos or matter on the one hand and spiritual reality on the other. Each of these can be known or cognised only by the faculties corresponding to it—the phenomenal universe by the human faculties, the senses and the intellect ; the world of spiritual reality only by the spiritual faculty. It seems to us paradoxical to talk of knowing or cognising nothingness ; but Plato is at least logical in regarding ignorance as a faculty corresponding to nothingness. And it must be remembered that what I have called by this rather barbarous term is not at all what we mean by nothing. Plato calls it Mē On, or that which does not really exist ; it is the Prakriti or matter or mere potential stuff of phenomena, of which, so long as it is untouched by spirit, nothing more can be said. It is also, in another aspect, illusion or Maya ; it is the veil which, in the manifested world, permanently hides the spirit or reality behind all phenomena, thus deluding our human faculties. But, for the spiritual faculty which sees only the reality, this veil is non-existent ; it is just pure illusion, Mē On, or that which is not really anything.[1]

With regard to the faculty which cognises reality and is capable of attaining true wisdom, we must note that Plato emphatically distinguishes it from the mental faculties which we call intellect and reason, just as the Hindu philosophers emphatically distinguish the Atman from the human Manas or mind. In the wonderful passage on page 490 (see page 104 above), the philosopher or ardent lover, after struggling upwards till he has taken hold of and united with reality, is said then at last " to beget Nous and Truth," and so become really wise. It is only when reality is reached that the faculty of true Nous[2] comes into being, as it were, or begins to function as the Knower ; not before, during all the years of preliminary mental discipline and struggle with science and knowledge.

This absolute distinction between the philosophic faculty and

[1] See Chapter VIII for a fuller explanation of this.

[2] I am compelled to use the Greek word " Nous " throughout. The only possible translation would be " the knowing faculty." To translate the word (as used by Plato) as " reason " is hopelessly misleading nowadays.

all our mental faculties gives the key to the rather difficult explanation of the nature of the true philosopher. Plato begins by contrasting him with the spurious philosophers who are merely philodoxical, or lovers of what seems to be true. This might imply nothing more than a difference of degree, or perhaps a difference of method. The philosopher might mean only the scientific thinker, as opposed to the unscientific but usually strongly opinionated guesser. Plato then goes on to liken the philosopher to the captain of a ship who knows some astronomy and navigation, while the crew know none at all. Here, too, we might perhaps legitimately conclude that he is merely distinguishing the man of science from the mass of ignorant people, especially as there is admittedly an analogy between the mutinous crew and a democratic populace.

But these commonplace interpretations of Plato's meaning are quite clearly put out of court by the third description of the philosopher, given in the remarkable passage to which I have just called special attention. He there appears as the passionate lover of genuine and absolute wisdom, which none may reach and win save those whose souls and minds have been prepared by an extraordinarily rigorous and almost unearthly discipline, and who have reached the high point at which they are at last able to bring into being a faculty which can know reality in virtue of its kinship with it. This, at any rate, is pure mysticism, and carries us beyond the level upon which any comparison is possible between the philosopher and even the wisest of thinkers or men of science. For the philosopher appears at last as the saintly seer and devotee, who, rising above all earthly visions, is rewarded by the vision of the eternal and changeless God.

That this is the true explanation of Plato's meaning is shown also by its harmony with all that follows. We shall find it fully confirmed in the arguments and allegories of the seventh book. But we can see that it has already been implied in the distinction between the philodoxical man and the philosophical man, and in the allegory of the ship's captain and crew. For in the former, the sharp contrast between devotion to what *seems* to be true and devotion to what *is* true, is clearly meant to emphasise a difference of kind, not of degree, in the truths known. The devotee of apparent reality is the man of science or the philosopher as we know him, who gets what truths he can by the use of his

reason and observation ; but the devotee of true reality is the man of wisdom, the philosopher as we do *not* know him, who reaches absolute truth by the use of a spiritual faculty very different from any faculty of mind. The ship's captain, again, differs in the same way from any of the crew who despise him ; for he does at least try to steer by the stars, while they, deriding such a source of knowledge, do not raise their thoughts higher than the ship's level.

We may note, further, that the explanation given is also confirmed by the account of the corruption of philosophic capacities, and of the antagonism between the life of the world and the life of the spirit.

This, the fourth great theme of the sixth book, requires rather careful explanation. Readers who are familiar with the text or with any accepted translation will probably have noticed that I have given a much wider significance to the passage describing the ruin of fine natures, by substituting the term " the world " in place of more exact translations of words denoting the populace or the mob or the multitude or the people meeting in the assembly. Now it is undeniable that Plato uses language which gives to the whole passage a kind of political application, making it appear as a bitter condemnation of democracy and a lament over the corruption, in a democratic city, of clever young men such as Alcibiades. Moreover, this application is quite consonant with Plato's own feelings. He really did hate the Athenian democracy, and had good reason to hate it, especially after the death of Socrates. And he meant what he said about the evil influence of democratic politics, just as he meant what he said about the possible salvation of States by " philosophic " guidance. But—if my interpretation of the whole of the rest of the book is at all near the truth—he meant much more besides. To anyone holding Plato's faith, it is not merely the voice of the passion-swayed assembly, but the voice of the world which is rightly to be described as " the roaring voice of the great illusion." It is not in politics only, but in the worldly life all through, that the seductions of false aims and ambitions assault and hurt the soul and turn it aside from the path of wisdom. The temptations of a brilliant political career may be the most insidious snare for the youth of high talents and high aims ; but every worldly pursuit is equally a danger, and every worldly end is equally unreal. The great peril of the

soul is a too strong attachment to any of the approved " goods " of this life, whether political or social or personal, artistic or scientific, simple or refined. The pursuit of *all* ends from which the self may reap reward must be abandoned ; *all* desires for any kind of worldly achievement must be put away, if the soul is to be free to enter the strait and narrow path which leads to its salvation. This, the teaching of all true religion, is Plato's teaching too. And if his language is closely scrutinised, it will be found to point always to this. We must remember that he uses the political analogy all through the book as the medium by which to convey a far deeper meaning. We must remember too that many of the terms he uses are used perforce in default of the wider terms which we possess but which the Greeks did not. He speaks often of the Polis or City State, where we now more naturally speak of human society, just as his " political " is often our " social " ; and he speaks of " the multitude " where we more naturally say " the world." Moreover, when he is describing the freedom or aloofness of the true philosopher, it is clearly not an aloofness from political concerns only which is intended. The spectator of all time and all existence " cannot possibly attach any importance to the things of this life," not merely of political life ; the true philosopher " cannot spare time to look down upon the occupations of men," not merely the occupations of politicians.

The narrow political interpretation of the passage is, I think, due to the fundamental misunderstanding of Plato's real contention underlying the sharp distinction which he draws between doxa and sophia.[1] We have, I admit, some justification for saying that a man's political views, besides being the most " opinionated," are also the least reasonable of his convictions. They have very little connection with any scientific basis, even of an empirical sort ; they are very little better than guesses supported by his practical and biassed view of self-interest and national interest. For this reason they may be sharply contrasted with the judgment of a scientific man concerning the pertinent objects of his science ; they may be called mere " opinions " by comparison with the latter's " knowledge." But this is not the contrast which Plato is drawing. He is distinguishing *all* our judgments based upon observation and experience of the phenomenal world with the

[1] Opinion, or believing that we know ; and wisdom, or certainty.

" inspired certainties " of the seer. And most of all is he concerned with our estimates of worth, our notions of " good " in relation to any of the activities of life. So long as we walk, unenlightened, on the path of pursuit, *all* our estimates, *all* our judgments about " ends worth striving after," are untrustworthy. They are " doxai," not exactly what we mean by opinions, but rather judgments based upon *what seems to us to be good.* More than this ; they are nearly always wrong, because what seems to us to be good can seldom be really good, so long as the general end we are seeking is the end of self-satisfaction. But the philosopher, who, by the preliminary annihilation of self, and the subsequent attainment of pure spiritual insight, has found the true end, the one supreme good, thereby becomes master of absolute certainty in regard to all " goods " ; and all his judgments are wise and sure, because they are all directly deduced from the supreme principle.

We worldly people, therefore, not as politicians, but as all-round practical men and women, are dangerous teachers of the would-be philosopher, unconsciously corrupting him by insisting upon the pursuit of the ends which the world normally approves, when his first duty is to rise above the path of pursuit in the world altogether, to become unworldly in defiance of our common sense, and so to find the heavenly treasure which alone can " nourish his soul and give it life."

There remains one other point to note. The detailed education of the philosopher is yet to be described ; but already Plato has made the startling assertion that the real study of philosophy is not for the young, nor even for the middle-aged, but only for those who are advanced in years and have finished their active citizen life. In the seventh book, it is true, he pretends to modify this astounding regulation ; but he does not really do so. He only allows the preparatory exercises to be undertaken at an earlier age than fifty ; the " coping-stone " of the whole education, philosophy itself, may not be reached till the middle of life has passed. It is clear that Plato wishes to emphasise the fact that by the pursuit of philosophy he means a very perilous and holy quest, so different from all ordinary pursuits and studies that none may undertake it save those who have put the world behind them, either because they have come to the end of their most active worldly duties, or because they have been specially

prepared, disciplined and dedicated to an unworldly calling. The world will deride his strange ordinance about the study of philosophy, only because it does not understand that philosophy is, for him, the vision of God beyond the scope of any except the pure in heart ; and therefore does not understand that all the education about which he cares is the religious education of slowly awakening spiritual faculties, which cannot normally function, cannot certainly function safely, in the worldly souls of those whose senses, hearts and minds are still " cheated by the magic veil of shows " which hides reality, but makes the stuff of our active life. But the regulation is entirely in keeping with the conception of the two arcs or paths of the soul's life, and the clear distinction between them which was described in an earlier chapter. It is also (as later chapters will show) exactly in agreement with the well-recognised Indian rule—for youth, education (in the simple sense) ; for adult life, the citizen duties ; for old age, retirement, meditation and the quest of spiritual realisation. How far it commits us to the view that there is one religion for youth and for active citizens of the world, and another religion for the old, or for those who, in aim and attitude, if not in activity, are no longer of the world, will be considered later. At this point I merely call attention to the additional evidence that the philosophy or religion which Plato is unfolding is something very far removed from the speculations which we dignify by the former term, and even from the beliefs and observances which sometimes exhaust the meaning we give to the latter.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ANALYSIS OF THE *REPUBLIC*, BOOK VI (PART) AND BOOK VII. THE FULL MEANING OF SPIRITUAL REALISATION, AND THE FINAL EDUCATION OF THE PHILOSOPHER.

WE now reach the really difficult part of the *Republic;* and I must warn the reader that the analysis which follows, of the last few pages of the sixth book and the whole of the seventh, is very hard to understand. The difficulty is only partly indicated by saying that the subjects dealt with are of a very abstract kind. I would rather say that Plato is now undertaking an almost impossible task and one which differs very materially from those hitherto attempted. He has already shown us what true religion can do for the soul of man : how it can guide him in all his conduct of life, purifying his character into an almost unearthly beauty, bringing him peace and serenity in all the chances and changes of mortal existence, and endowing him with wisdom, and power to use his wisdom, not for himself alone but for the salvation of his fellow-men. In all the long account he has given of this—even in the rather difficult passages dealing with the nature of reality and of true wisdom—he has succeeded (and this is part of his astonishing skill) in keeping us close to the interests of our human life. The philosopher described may have been far above us, but never out of sight or out of touch. We have been led to feel that even in his highest flights he is always coming back to save his State—*our* State ; to show how life can be lived perfectly—how *our* life can be lived perfectly here on earth ; to be an example of a righteousness which we can take as our pattern in all our human activities. Even the sharpest contrasts between his world and our world have not really removed him from us : indeed, the very contrast of his unworldliness with our worldliness has somehow kept him near to the world we know. And his righteousness, we feel, is after all our own fitful striving after good made perfect and made constant. His excellences may be superhuman, but

they are never non-human. They are *our* qualities, infinitely refined.

But now Plato is about to lead us along a path which winds, in a sort of cold loneliness, up above the clouds. Righteousness and conduct, individual and social life, as they interest us, are dropped out of sight. The talk is all about *knowing ;* and both the process and the result are of a kind quite unfamiliar to us, quite divorced from the science or thought we deal with, purposely separated from any sort of application to the utilities which are the goal of all our learning and thinking. And our perplexity is increased by the fact that there are no words with which to express accurately the conceptions presented. Plato talks of science : but it is not our science that he means. " We want some other term," he says ; and we have not got one. We are driven to use the words appropriate to our intellectual processes ; and then we must needs qualify everything said in order to avoid the almost certain misunderstandings. This cannot be otherwise : no mystic has ever found a suitable vocabulary ; how, indeed, can he express in the terms of common sense the things that transcend common sense ? But we may at least avoid the crudest errors of interpretation if we bear in mind that Plato is now trying to reveal both the preparatory and the final processes by which the pure spiritual faculty is caused to function in that other world to which it belongs—to function as what we must needs call " the Knower " among objects which we must needs call " knowable " ; and in each case we must try to imagine a knowledge which bears very much the same relation to our knowledge as the light of the sun bears to the flicker of a fire.

Socrates continues the argument as follows : Let us now consider how we are to secure the right people to guard the spirit and aim of our State : in what studies we are to educate them ; and at what ages they are to pursue these studies. You remember that, in the earlier part of our discussion, we described the tests through which our Guardians would have to pass in order to determine who were the most perfect or true Guardians. Well, we must now go a step further, and assert boldly that these most perfect Guardians must be made true philosophers,[1] such as

[1] I accept the reading of the text here. Some translators and commentators transpose the words " guardians " and " philosophers," an alteration which

we have just described. But we shall find very few of them fit for this final attainment ; for, in addition to all the tests of character which we enumerated, we must now impose searching tests of their real aptitude for hard and prolonged study, in order that we may discover whether they are fit for the highest pursuit of all. For these chosen Guardians will have a long and difficult road before them. They may take none of the short cuts which we have allowed ourselves to take in order to reach the end of our argument, but must work right through all the preliminary stages of study until they reach the goal of the highest wisdom, the knowledge of the Real Good, which is the cause, creator and essence of all good things. For what will it profit them if they win everything else, but not this ? They would then be on the level of the rest of the world, which thinks that the good is pleasure, or, at best, prudence, but has no knowledge of what it really is. Can we allow our most perfect Guardians to walk in such darkness as this ? Can they be fit to guard the earthly forms of good, such as righteousness and beauty, if they do not know that which is the secret and cause of their goodness ? Conviction or belief will not be enough for them here : they must *know*, or else they will be like blind men who only keep on the straight path by a happy accident.

Of course you ask me to tell you what is the Real Good. My friends, I wish I could tell you ; but I cannot. It is not something which can be explained to you in the way in which I have explained its reflections, righteousness and temperance and the rest. The most I can do is to talk to you about what appears as an offshoot or scion of the Real Good, and very closely resembles it ; and this I will willingly do.

You must remember that we have all along been drawing a clear distinction between the multiplicity of things which are good and beautiful and so on, and the one essential goodness or beauty. The many forms are seen by the eye ; the one essence is apprehended by Nous. Now with reference to the power of seeing, notice what a unique and wonderful faculty it is. Sight belongs to the eye, and the qualities it sees—colour, for instance—belong to the objects seen. Yet neither can the

appears to destroy the meaning of the passage. Plato is about to make the final demonstration of the method by which the true philosopher can be made ; and he begins by asserting that the best Guardians must be made philosophers, and then proceeds to show how it can be done.

one see nor the other be seen without the agency of a third thing, light, which is indispensable to both. And this noble link which causes our eyes to see and visible objects to be seen, is derived from the sun, which is thus the cause of sight, and the dispenser of the faculty of seeing, as well as the cause of visible objects.

Now you must consider the sun as the offspring and reflection of the Good, and the visible world as the reflection of the real and really knowable world, while the eye, which is the organ of sight, corresponds to the soul, which contains the organ of real knowledge. And just as the eye becomes dim and almost blind when the sunlight is withdrawn from the visible objects, so the soul's sight is dim and unsteady when the objects upon which it is fixed belong to this world of birth and decay, and are therefore blent with darkness. For then it rests in " opinion " only ; but when its faculty of Nous fastens upon objects over which truth and reality are shining, then it *knows*, and is no longer in the twilight of error or uncertainty. And this power which gives reality and truth to the objects of real knowledge and gives to the soul the faculty of knowing them, is the essential or real Good, the origin of true knowledge and of truth, though itself more beautiful than both, more real than the reality they possess. For just as the sun gives to visible things not only their power to be seen, but also their vitality and nutriment, although not itself equivalent to vitality, so the Good gives to the knowable things not only the gift of being known, but also their real and essential existence, although itself, far from being identical with real existence, actually transcends it in dignity and power.

I see you are amused at the miraculous superiority I attribute to the Good. But, believe me, I am not saying nearly all that ought to be said about it. And now, following out this simile, let us assume the existence of two distinct worlds each presided over by its own reigning power ; and let us picture these two worlds as the two segments of a line divided into two unequal parts, the one representing the world of visible objects, the other the world of knowable objects. Let us then divide each segment of the line again into two unequal parts—the inequality in each case denoting the degree of distinctness or indistinctness with which the objects are seen or known. You will then get a figure representing four regions or classes of objects : first, and lowest, visible images, such as shadows and reflections ; secondly,

visible objects, or phenomena, by which I mean the whole world of nature and art ; thirdly, knowable but hypothetical outlines of true reality, discerned by the mind with the help of the phenomenal world which it uses merely as imagery ; and fourthly, true realities, which the soul reaches without reference to phenomena at all, but using only the outlines of real things in the third segment in order to make its way unaided to the final goal of reality, which is known without any kind of hypothesis whatever.

This is a difficult conception ; let me explain it further. You know how geometers, for example, assume all the angles and figures with which they deal. They do not give any account of the how and why of a straight line or right angle or circle, but accept the existence of these hypothetically, and so argue from them to their conclusions—but always using *visible* angles and circles to help them, although it is not with the visible squares and diameters that they are concerned, but with the absolute square and diameter—the abstractions which can only be seen by the eye of thought. Well, this is an example of the process and the kind of objects belonging to the third segment of the line—or the first part of the knowable segment. And by the second part of the knowable segment (the fourth and last segment of the whole line) I denote the process and objects of pure Nous, working with the force of Dialectic, using the hypothetical abstractions of the third segment, not as first principles, but as genuine hypotheses, as stepping-stones to that which is not hypothetical at all, but the absolute first principle of everything ; and when that is done, it descends again to conclusions, now made certain and absolute, by the help of forms which are themselves certain and self-subsisting, and rest on no hypothesis whatever.

You see now how our figure of the four segments represents gradations of uncertainty and certainty, from mere guessing in the lowest, to absolute certainty in the highest ; and the faculties or mental states which function in each segment respectively we may call conjecture, belief, understanding and, finally, pure Nous.

And now I will show you the difference between the upper and the lower segments of the line in another way. Our natural condition in regard to education and ignorance may be pictured as follows : Imagine a number of people living in a great underground cavern, open on one side to the daylight, in which they

have been confined from childhood, chained down and firmly bound in such a way as to force them to look always straight forward into the gloom, with no possibility of turning their heads round to the light. And imagine also a bright fire burning a little way off, above and behind them, and a raised roadway passing between the fire and the prisoners, with a low wall running along it, like the screen which conjurers put up between themselves and their audience, and over which they show their wonders. Also, figure to yourself a number of persons walking behind this wall, carrying puppets, in the likeness of men and animals and all sorts of things, which overtop the wall; and imagine some of these persons to be talking and others not. I am describing a weird scene, you say, and weird prisoners? Yes; but they resemble us. For let me ask you, first, whether people so confined could ever have seen anything of themselves or one another, or of the things carried past them, except the shadows thrown upon the surface of the cave facing them? And all these shadows they would give names to, would they not? And if the voices of those who moved the puppets were echoed from the cave wall in front of them, the prisoners would believe the sounds came from the shadows; and they would believe, too, that these shadows of manufactured puppets were real, and the only realities.

Now suppose that, in the course of nature, one of these prisoners has been released and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk with open eyes towards the light. He would find this process of forcible conversion very painful; and at first his eyes would be dazzled by the brightness; and he would be unable to see the objects whose shadows he used to see quite clearly. And if anyone said to him that in those days he was watching foolish phantoms, but that now he is a little nearer to reality, and is turned towards things more real, and sees rather more correctly; and if, further, he were told to look at the objects passing, and to say what they were; do you not think that he would be puzzled, and would think that his former visions were truer than the objects now forced upon his notice? And if he were next compelled to gaze at the light itself, would not his eyes be hurt, and would he not want to turn back to the shadows which he could see distinctly? And finally, if someone were to drag him violently up the rough and steep ascent from

the cavern, and refuse to let him go until he had drawn him out into the light of the sun, would he not be angry and indignant at such treatment, and also so completely dazzled by the glare as to be incapable of making out even one of the objects now called true ? He will need time to grow accustomed to the light in that upper world. And then he will begin by distinguishing shadows ; then reflections ; then real objects ; and then he will see the moon and the stars—for he will find it easier to look up in the night-time than in the day ; and last of all he will be able to contemplate the nature of the sun—not as it appears in water or on alien ground, but as it is in itself and on its own territory. And he will conclude that the sun is the author of the seasons, and the guardian of all things in the visible world, and in a way the cause of all those things which he and his old companions used to see. And when he remembers his first habitation, and his old fellow-prisoners, and what passed for wisdom among them, he will congratulate himself on the change, and will feel pity for them. No longer will he covet the prizes which the dwellers in the cave bestow on those who have the keenest eye for a passing object, and who remember best what precedes and follows and accompanies it, and from these data divine what is going to come next. Rather will he be ready to go through anything than live that life and think those thoughts again.

But suppose he were to descend once more into the cave, what would happen ? His eyes would now be blinded by the gloom, would they not ? And his inability to recognise the old shadows would make him a general laughing-stock. " *That* is all the good that comes of making the wonderful ascent ! You go up with your eyes in perfect order, and you come back blind ! " That is what the people would say ; and if anyone attempted to set *them* free and carry them to the light, they would probably put him to death, if they possibly could.

Now, my friends, you must apply this imaginary case in all its parts to my former statements. The prison-house is the visible world ; the light of the fire is the sun ; the steep ascent and the subsequent contemplation of the upper world signify the mounting of the soul into the really knowable region. That, at least, is how I see it ; though God knows whether I am right. And further, in the upper world, or world of real knowledge, the

Absolute Good is the limit of our enquiries, and can barely be perceived ; but, when perceived, we cannot help concluding that it is in every case the source of all that is bright and beautiful—giving birth to light and the sun in the visible world, and in the other world dispensing, directly and with full authority, truth and Nous ; and, also, that if anyone desires to act wisely, in private or in public, he must set this Absolute Good before his eyes.

And now tell me. Can you be surprised that those who have climbed so high are always unwilling to return to the affairs of men ? And when they do return, can you be surprised that those who have just quitted the contemplation of divine objects should appear awkward and dazed and ridiculous when they begin again to study our human weaknesses ? Until they are accustomed to the darkness, they are no match, in the law courts or elsewhere, for those who have always lived in the dark, and have never yet had a glimpse of the true features of justice. For you must remember that the sight is dazed not only by the change from darkness to light, but also by the change from light to darkness.

If all this is true, we reach at once a right conception of education. It cannot mean, as many think, infusing into the mind a knowledge of which it was destitute, just as sight might be instilled into blinded eyes. The faculty of knowledge, the instrument by which each may learn, is already within the soul of everyone ; and true education means wheeling round this faculty or instrument, together with the whole soul which contains it, away from the perishing world, until it is able to endure the contemplation of the real world, and the brightest part of it—the Absolute Good. To this process of revolution of the soul there must belong some art, which teaches how the change can best be brought about. But its object will not be to generate in the person the power of seeing. *That* is there already, only turned in the wrong direction, and therefore unable to see ; and our educative art will aim at remedying this defect. Moreover, while, on the one hand, all other so-called virtues of the soul are formed in it slowly, by habit and exercise, but do not pre-exist in it ; the virtue of wisdom, on the other hand, really does belong to a more divine substance, which never loses its energy, but requires change of position to bring it into use, while without

that it remains useless and injurious. For this eye of the soul which *can* guide us to the vision of Good if it is set in the right direction, is normally bound down by the soul's preoccupation with the things below; and while that is so, it may make us very clever at seeing the things which are *not* true, and may help us to go far—in the wrong direction; but it can never lead us to the light until our souls are converted.

You see, then, why it is that we must use all our efforts as educators to cut away and strip off from the characters of our youths all those heavy earth-born weights which cling round the pleasures of the senses, in order that they may be able to look upwards and see and love the things that we have called really good.

And now note this. When we have started the noblest characters of all upon the path which leads to wisdom, we shall constrain them to press onwards up the steep ascent until they reach the vision of the Most High, by the aid of the highest science. But we will not allow them to lose themselves in the vision, and remain wrapt in contemplation like souls which have been translated to the islands of the blest. Oh no! They shall, indeed, gaze their fill upon the Good; *but*, thereafter, they shall be forced to return to the cave, and take their share in the toils of all its prisoners. You say it is unfair to lay this compulsion upon them, and to force them thus to live a life which is worse than the one within their reach? But have you forgotten that our aim is not to make any one class in our State extraordinarily happy, but simply to link all classes together into a perfect unity, each sharing with each whatever good he may find? So we shall tell these fortunate ones that it is strict justice to compel them to return to the cave. It is not as if they were members of an ordinary State, in which case they might fairly claim that they had risen by their own unaided efforts, growing toward the light like self-sown plants which owe no debt to anyone. In our State it will be very different. They will owe all their growth and power of rising to the State which has nurtured them; and *therefore* they must return to pay back the debt by bringing their wisdom down to earth and making all our human ordinances true copies of the divine originals which they alone have seen.

Observe how different our government will then be from all others. In all existing States men actually compete for office,

and covet authority and the right to rule as though these were the highest prizes. But in ours, those who rule will be just those who are least eager to rule—the true condition of good government. For this, my friend, is really the truth : if you would have a well-governed State, you must find for your destined rulers an occupation better than ruling, a life finer than that of those who have authority ; for only in such a State will your rulers be above all covetousness, and really rich, not in gold, but in wisdom and virtue ; whereas if beggars and hungry seekers for gain or honour take the reins of a State, everything goes to ruin.

But let us now consider in detail the preparation for the ascent of which I have been talking—the road which leads from the night-like day of ordinary life up to the true day of real existence, the road, in fact, which we declare to be the path of true philosophy. What we need for this preparation is a graduated series of sciences or studies, each of which is marked by its power to turn the soul from the fleeting to the real. Of course we shall be quite pleased if these studies can be shown to be useful for other purposes also, such as the arts of war, since our youths must be trained for fighting. But I am afraid we must rule out of court the studies we originally ordained for the education of the young—I mean gymnastic and the culture of the Muses. These will not meet our present requirements. Gymnastic is concerned with the growth and waste of the body, that is to say, with the changeable and perishing ; while the education of the soul presided over by the Muses is, after all, only a sort of training by the influence of habit imparting a kind of harmoniousness to the nature trained, but giving no science to the soul. But there is one study appropriate to youth which really does answer our purpose, if it is properly taught, and will serve well as the first of our graduated series of sciences—I mean the study of Number, or Calculation. This is not only necessary to every science, and therefore useful even in war ; but it also naturally leads to discrimination and reflection, which is exactly what we want. I know it is never properly used for this purpose ; but it *can* be so used, for it constantly deals with objects of perception which stimulate our reflective faculties into action. I mean that it is always dealing with *relative* amounts and *relative* sizes, so that every object it presents to our thought at once suggests other

and different objects with which it has to be compared. You cannot think of any quantity as such without also thinking of more and less : you cannot think of 2 without thinking of 1 and 3. Nothing in Arithmetic is a single whole, apprehensible by itself : every number requires other numbers to be grasped and thought of, or else it is quite meaningless. And in this way the science of numbers, if rightly presented, positively forces the mind to compare, reflect, and discriminate, and so take the first steps on the road to truth.

The next science in our series will be the science of dimensions in space—that is, Geometry. I see you are pleased that I add this study, because it too is useful in war. But I am really thinking of its other use, I mean its effect as a stimulant to lead us upwards to the contemplation of the Good. Now Geometry, like Arithmetic, is usually treated as if its value lay in its application to practical ends ; but we will take an exactly opposite view, and will treat it entirely as a study pursued merely for the sake of knowledge, and for the sake of knowledge of what is real and eternal, not of what is transitory and perishable ; for just as we shall concern ourselves, in Arithmetic, only with the purely abstract side of numbers, so in Geometry we shall deal only with lines and figures as abstract and ideal, never confusing these with any lines or figures which our senses can perceive.

What shall be our third science ? Astronomy ? That would please you, I see, because of its known utility to generals in war as well as to farmers and sailors in time of peace ; and really it is as well to mention this, because most people will find it hard to believe that the true value of these studies lies in their power to cause an organ of our souls to be purged of the blindness and quickened from the deadness occasioned by other pursuits—an organ whose preservation is of more importance than a thousand eyes, since only by it can truth be seen. But you, my friend, should not need to be told that my allusions to utility in warfare or any other worldly utility whatsoever, were merely playful : what have we now to do with such mundane advantages as these ?

However, I was wrong to suggest Astronomy as the third in our series of studies. Next in order to Geometry, which deals with concepts of plane surfaces, or space in two dimensions, must come a science which deals with spatial relations in three

dimensions, that is, with concepts of solid bodies at rest ; and then we will assign the fourth place to Astronomy, which deals with solid bodies in motion.

Again you say you approve, and this time because Astronomy seems to you particularly suitable for compelling the soul to look upwards, since it is wholly concerned with the stars above our heads. You seem to think that you can make a short cut to heavenly wisdom by lying on your back and gazing at the sky ! O my friend, *can* you not understand what I am talking about ? And that, when I speak of forcing the soul to look up and not down, this has nothing at all to do with our earthly above and below ? Why, *no* science makes our souls look upwards so long as it is concerned with any sensible or perceptible objects, but only when it has to do with the Real and the Invisible. " So long as a man is trying to study phenomena, I deny that he can really learn anything, because no objects of sense admit of scientific treatment ; and his soul is pointed downwards, not upwards." That is why I keep warning you that all these sciences must be studied in a manner very different from that now universally pursued. This is the case with Astronomy too. The stars in the fretted sky are doubtless the most beautiful and most perfect of visible things, but we will leave them to the ordinary astronomer. They will not be the objects of our science : *our* study of astronomy will be concerned with far more beautiful and perfect things—I mean " those true revolutions which real velocity and real slowness, existing in true number and in all true forms, accomplish relatively to one another " ; and thought, not sight, is the instrument we shall use for our study. That fretted sky shall be but our pattern or figure to help us in our study—just as a diagram helps us in our Geometry. But we shall no more trouble about the actual movements of the visible stars than the Geometer troubles about the colour of the lines in his diagram ; indeed, our true Astronomer will hold it quite absurd to devote extraordinary pains to determine the actual movements of the heavenly bodies. Let us remember, then, that our fourth science is not the study of the motions of the stars, but Astronomy in a new sense—the study of pure motion among real solids, visible only to the mind's eye ; and we shall let the heavenly bodies alone. It will be a far harder study than any known Astronomy, I grant you ;

and the same is the case with all our other sciences. But that must be so, if our students are to reach their goal.

There is one more preparatory science which should prove valuable. Just as Astronomy is the science of orderly movements among visible objects, so there must be a science of orderly movements among audible objects—a kind of pure Harmonics, in fact. But once again let me warn you that this study will not at all resemble the science of Harmonics as now understood. It will deal, not with audible concords, but with the pure forms of which the sounds we hear are only the reflection. We shall have to ask the followers of Pythagoras to explain its principles for us, for they alone will know what I am seeking. It would be useless to go to the ordinary professors of Harmonics: they would not understand what we mean when we talk about a science of *pure* Harmonics. And this science, like our pure Astronomy, will be a very difficult branch of study.

You seem to think it will all be too difficult, and will require faculties more than human. My dear friend, you must realise that this is no ordinary course of scientific research which we are planning. Why, all the studies we have so far arranged are only the preparatory stage—the prelude, as it were, to the actual hymn. And by the actual hymn, or the final study, the coping-stone of our educational structure, I mean simply Dialectic, or the unflinching pursuit of every reality by the pure exercise of Nous, independently of all sensuous information, until the real nature of the Good is grasped, and the soul arrives at the very end of the really knowable world.

And now observe once more the meaning of my earlier account of the two worlds or planes of knowledge. Here on earth, with our human faculties, we begin with reflections and shadows, and go on to the careful study of phenomena, observing their sequences and coexistences and laws, and ending with the observed causes of these, thus rising from mere guesswork about the world we live in to a kind of relative certainty as to its structure and movement. Just so, in that other world I have been speaking of, in which phenomena are exchanged for realities, and our human faculties superseded by divine insight, we begin (as in the five sciences I have named) with the ideal reflections or shadows—pure concepts, as I called them—and then pass on to the realities themselves, learning *their* harmonies and laws;

and we end with the supreme knowledge of the great cause of all things—the Good, thus rising from understanding to wisdom—both the understanding and the wisdom belonging to a plane unknown to human scientists. And the final process in the ascent is Dialectic.

You ask me to tell you more about this Dialectic and its methods. My dear friend, you could not follow me farther, though I would gladly lead you to the goal. But I assert boldly that Dialectic, and that alone, can unveil truth, and only to the eyes of those who have mastered the sciences we have described: and that there is no other way. For Dialectic alone can raise us above all hypotheses and uncertainties by connecting all with the absolute first principle; and then, finding the eye of the soul quite buried in a swamp of barbarous ignorance, it is able to draw it gently upwards using, as handmaids in the task, the studies mentioned. These latter we have hitherto called "sciences," because there is no other name. But they require another name—one which would show their superiority to our ordinary study of phenomena, and at the same time their inferiority to the final goal of wisdom. And I assert too that all ordinary students of sciences as ordinarily understood are not within sight of reality at all, but only see the phantoms of it; and unless they too find the road upwards to the other world, they do but dream and sleep away this present life, and lose their chance of finding the life which is real and eternal.

But now I must bring you back once more to consider the qualities needed in those who shall attempt this ascent, and the care which we must exercise in the choice of those who shall be apprenticed to Philosophy. We have agreed about the moral qualities—austerity, fortitude, loftiness of mind, and the like. But we must emphasise the importance of one quality, partly moral, partly intellectual: I mean, a genuine passion for truth, and hatred of any kind of falsehood. It is not enough merely that they should hate lies and abhor them: many excellent people do that, and yet calmly harbour all kinds of false convictions without the least distress. But our students must hate involuntary untruth as much as wilful lying, and must be quick to detect any trace of it in their own souls. Further, they must be free and glad learners: no tasks for them, even in their childhood; for those who do not love to learn knowledge will never

learn to love wisdom. Moreover, we must not defer their special training till too late in life. I said some time ago that they should not begin the final ascent to wisdom till they reached the age of fifty or so. But that will be too late for the course of study we have now laid down. We must select wisdom's apprentices soon after the age of thirty, testing them to see whether they are really able to divest themselves of their eyes and other senses, and whether they are faithful enough in their love of truth to be able to stand the shock of discovering that all their previous knowledge has been but an illusion and a sham. For Dialectic is a terrible solvent of all accepted beliefs and estimates: no youth must be allowed to meddle with it, nor anyone who is not firmly rooted in the love of truth, and able to stand fast by her whatever the cost may be. And when we have chosen them, these constant and incorruptible men and women of thirty or more, we will make them resign every other pursuit, and for five years devote themselves utterly to the studies we have ordained, including Dialectic. Then, for fifteen years more, we will plunge them again into the life of the cave, testing their steadfastness and accustoming them to the duties of administration. And then, at the age of fifty, when all tests are passed and all temptations overcome, they shall undertake their final task, and lifting up the eye of the soul, shall fix it upon that which gives light to all things; and so, having surveyed the essence of Good, they shall take it as their pattern, to be copied in the work of regulating their country and their fellow-citizens and themselves, which is to occupy them for the rest of life, each in turn leaving his philosophical pursuits for a while and taking his share in the difficult duties of public life, holding office for his country's sake, not as a desirable but as a dutiful occupation. And thus, but not otherwise, shall the perfect State be realised, under the rule of veritable seers of reality, whose eyes have beheld the perfect vision, whose souls have been steeped in truth. And if even one such seer arises at any time, and is given full authority in a State and full power to reform it, the ideal may be made real. But he will, of course, first make a clean sweep of all existing and established customs and ordinances, in order to obtain a new canvas for his drawing. Indeed, his vision gives him so strange and new a pattern that he will first of all be obliged to isolate, far away from the influence of their parents and their

common character, all children under ten years old, and then wait till these in turn have grown up into a new and unsullied generation, before he can begin his work of fashioning the Ideal State. . . .

The long passage which I have tried to summarise (it occupies some forty pages of the Greek text) is at once the hardest and the most important in the whole *Republic*. We may regard it as Plato's final attempt to explain what he means by the Real and the knowledge of the Real, and to show the process by which we can attain to it. And it is inevitable that the modern philosopher, or the thinker who does his best, with the aid of the best results of scientific enquiry and logical method, to reach a comprehensive view of life and the world as an intelligible whole, should attribute the same aim to Plato, and should therefore interpret him in terms of the same philosophy. It follows that modern commentators have, with hardly an exception, assumed that Plato is simply attempting to outline an epistemology or theory of knowledge, which, as our science and power of analysis increase, may guide us nearer to a theory of facts, comprehensive, logically co-ordinated and capable of focussing the scattered facets of life and purpose as harmonious parts of a single whole. They assume that his imagination was fired by the thought of a perfectly unified science or philosophy, reached by a perfected logical method; and that the whole of these very wonderful books of the *Republic* must be regarded simply as a high-flown expression of this ideal of science and logic. They therefore assume further that the mental conditions which Plato distinguishes so carefully denote merely different degrees of knowledge or understanding, ranging from the most superficial to the most exact and complete, and that the faculties which he distinguishes with equal care are nothing more than the faculties or mental states which we too designate by the terms used—opinion and knowledge, belief, understanding and reason and the like.

Such a conception of Plato's aim compels one to treat his exaggerated enthusiasm with a kind of patronising tolerance. He was so obviously at a disadvantage, in the matter of equipment for his task. Science was in its infancy in his day; logical method was little developed; the metaphysical stage of thought had not yet given way to the positive. Consequently no theory of knowledge could be anything but fanciful and crude by

comparison with later attempts. Plato's account of the lofty summit which the human intellect may one day reach for its synoptic vision of "all time and all existence" is inspiring, doubtless, even if much too fantastic and grandiloquent to be useful; but for solid value it is not to be compared with, let us say, Bacon's outline of the goal of knowledge, any more than Plato's arrangement of the sciences in the order of their certainty, abstractness and generality, is to be compared with that of Auguste Comte.

Now, as I venture to dissent altogether from this modern attitude to Plato's aim, and to believe that it entirely misses the point of his teaching, I must in fairness admit that the terms he uses, if taken in their usual sense, do support the limited interpretation which commentators have adopted. That is to say, he is trying all through to explain what the *knowable* universe is, as superior to the *visible;* and the Greek word "noetos" means what we mean by knowable or intelligible just as certainly as the Greek word "horatos" means what we mean by visible. But, quite apart from the fact that Plato's language is grotesquely extravagant and misleading if it is only meant to apply to a conception of an intelligible universe in the ordinary philosophical sense, I must remind the reader that Plato uses the word "Nous," or the faculty which *knows*, in a definitely hyper-philosophical sense, in order to designate a peculiar faculty for apprehending truth, which, as he plainly tells us, is never called into use at all in our normal life and thought, but "lies buried deep within the soul" until conversion comes and a new sight is given to us.[1] And in like manner he uses the term "noetos," in his most careful expositions (in the Timaeus, for instance, as well as here), to denote the eternal world of reality knowable only to Nous, as distinguished from the changing world of life and fact which we know. For the rest, readers may judge for themselves whether the ordinary interpretation is satisfactory, or whether a totally different reading must be given to the whole passage.

And to help the reader to reach his conclusion, I would ask him to put to himself two questions. First, can he conceive that any sane writer, who is dealing with the problems of epistemology and logic, of realism and conceptualism, of the relation of universals to particulars, of scientific method and its goal, of classifica-

[1] The peculiar meaning of other terms is discussed in a later chapter.

tion of the sciences, or any other of the much discussed questions concerning the nature of ordinary knowledge, would or could, so long as he kept his sanity, clothe his exposition in such language as Plato adopts in the sixth and seventh books? Secondly, the reader is perhaps familiar with the works of the best-known epistemologists, logicians, analysers of scientific method and classifiers of the sciences, such as Aristotle and Bacon, Hume and Hamilton, Comte and Whewell and Mill and Spencer. Has he ever come across, in the writings of any of these, anything even remotely resembling the "extravagance" of style, simile, metaphor and assertion which marks these two books of Plato's? If he can honestly say "yes" to this question I will not ask him to accompany me farther. But if his answer is "no," then I ask him boldly to try with me to find an explanation a little less improbable than that universally put forward by the intellectualist commentators.

The interpretation I suggest—in harmony, I think, with the explanation of the moral universe which has occupied the preceding books—is as follows:—

Religion, for most of us, rests upon faith. We believe in God, and in His goodness upon which our life rests; and our belief is the tie which binds us to Him, and keeps us in the path of His law. The *moral* significance of our faith is what matters most; if this is sound, our conduct will hold true, our estimates of value will be right estimates, and the goal before us will be the goal of the Good. This is enough, indeed, for most of us. But is there not possible a deeper certainty still, by which faith shall become unshakable, transmuted into the full illumination of perfect knowledge and understanding, binding us to God by even stronger ties than those of unquestioning belief?

There *is* such a foundation for our faith, though it is hard to reach, and only the few can find it. And this foundation of absolute certainty is the goal which must be set before the eyes of those who are to be the perfect rulers of themselves, and the perfect guardians of the good among men. We may call this certainty absolute knowledge or complete illumination or wisdom wedded to the objects of wisdom. It is as far removed from ordinary knowledge—even scientific knowledge based upon the most accurate observation and reasoning—as the vision of things in the full sunshine is removed from the sight of shadows in the

firelight. And the objects of such knowledge are as superior to the objects grasped by our ordinary perception or understanding as the sun itself is superior to a fire made by hands. Well may we call it a miraculous superiority, inconceivable to ordinary thinkers ! Yet this is what we must try to accept as the difference between the really knowable world and the world we live in and study and analyse.

The faculties by which we can know it are equally superior to our ordinary human faculties. This phenomenal world is perceived by the senses—sight and touch and the rest—and is cognised by the intellect or reason, which, working upon the data of sense-perception, arrives at general principles and laws of the phenomena—causal explanations, we may fairly call them, provided we remember that they are all really hypothetical, and assume all through a uniformity of nature and conservation of energy as well as an underlying cause or plan or purpose which our science never pretends to know. In this way, in all our understanding of the world we see, we begin by guesswork and go on to a kind of knowledge—though we had better give this an inferior name, to mark the fact that it is all relative and hypothetical. So we will call it dogmatic conviction that the results of our observation and reasoning are really valid.

But the other world, of real and really knowable things, can neither be perceived by the senses nor cognised by the intellectual faculties. There is, however, buried deep within the soul, a special faculty which lies fast asleep during our normal activities, has nothing to do with our sense-perceptions or reasoning about them, and cannot be awakened by any ordinary scientific study or philosophic thought. But it *can* be roused by the exercise, first, of a rare devotion to the highest good in all forms of the conduct of life, and then by an even rarer devotion to austere practices of meditation. And this faculty we will call Nous, or the Knower—the same word which others use for reason or intelligence, but which we will use in a special sense.

The world and its wise men will call all this mere foolishness. It belittles their powers ; it impugns the results of their science. And the worst of it is that we cannot *prove* to anyone that there exists such a super-world of being or such a super-faculty of knowing. These can only be revealed with certainty to those who themselves have trodden the long path which leads beyond

this world, and have had the eye of the soul opened and turned upwards to the light.

This is clearly the gist of what Plato is trying to explain. His language is all in harmony with this conception. He cannot tell us often enough that he is proclaiming a strange doctrine, and one at which the world will laugh. He insists that the task of explanation is really beyond him—or, at any rate, that it is beyond his hearers to understand him fully. "We should have to take a longer road," he tells them. Further, his similes and metaphors confirm this interpretation. The segments of the divided line are the provinces of different faculties, and of these faculties the names, it is true, are those which are familiar to us as denoting our normal faculties or mental states: conjecture, belief, understanding and reason are the usual and fair translations of them. But Plato posits a very deep distinction between the two lower and the two upper sections of the line. The upper half plainly refers to existence and knowledge which are *not* normal or ordinary. The "sciences," beginning with Arithmetic and ending with Dialectic, are the most extraordinary exercises imaginable—purposely and expressly distinguished from what we mean by science. Plato connects them with the teaching of Pythagoras—a most significant reference to a strangely mystical teacher whom he only twice mentions, but each time with evident respect. And these "Pythagorean sciences" are certainly not the sciences we know. The latter belong to and deal only with the phenomenal; but even the preparatory stage of "true knowledge" belongs to something far more real—though shadowy still by comparison with wisdom itself, even as its objects are shadowy by comparison with real objects; yet real enough when compared with the wholly illusory "world of change and decay" and its "doctrines" of scientific explanation. And the final segment of the line belongs entirely to Nous, that faculty "of divine substance" which, whatever else it is, is not reason nor intelligence nor any other mental faculty.

The allegory of the Cave confirms this sharp distinction between the two chief segments of the divided line, and proves, as it is expressly intended to prove, that they are separated by an immeasurable distance. *All* our normal human thoughts and actions belong to the cave in which we are prisoners; even the scientific enquiries and philosophical explanations achieved by

our wisest men do not reach beyond the puppets and the firelight which casts their shadows. *These* are the "causes" we reach: their uncertain movements are the basis of our "laws."

But above and beyond, "up a steep pathway" hard to find and harder still to climb, lies another world. In it, too, there are shadows, and the causes of the shadows—the same two grades of being and of knowing which were found in the cave. But the shadows now are shadows of realities, not of puppets, cast by the sun, not by a flickering fire; and the realities are vitalised and made real by the sun of good itself—"the very goal of this really knowable world, hardly to be looked upon even by the eye of the spirit."

So far I am relying entirely upon obvious arguments drawn from the internal evidence of the text itself. This evidence is strong enough, in all conscience; yet I doubt whether it will carry much weight with the majority of thinkers and commentators who may be called rationalist or intellectualist or any similar name which marks them as reputable, sane and orthodox. For it seems to have become a fixed fashion to interpret the sixth and seventh books of the *Republic* in accordance with the doctrines of nineteenth-century Positivism, and therefore to compare Plato's scheme of educative sciences with our arrangements of positive sciences in the order of their exactness. Thus one finds even so sympathetic a commentator as the late D. G. Ritchie gravely asserting that, if chemistry or physiology had been discovered in his day, Plato would doubtless have inserted them in his scheme after Astronomy!—a suggestion, one ventures to say, worthy only of Glaucon at his very worst. For is it not abundantly clear that Plato is occupied with a wholly different purpose? "Our science of harmony shall have nothing to do with audible sounds: our science of Astronomy shall leave the visible stars alone. We want only those studies which shall tear the soul away from *all* phenomena, and force it to dwell upon what all the scientific world calls phantasies, but *we* call the beginnings of reality. Chemistry? Physiology? Doubtless excellent examples of the sciences of the lower line. Let the world pursue them, and find out all it can about its bodies and their environment. *We* are on a different quest, Glaucon. We are out to find the Absolute, not the laws of the relative and phenomenal;

to learn all we can about spirit, not to gain useful information about matter."

But I must leave the intellectualist to make what he can of Plato's obscurities, and pass on to defend in a different way the interpretation I have assumed to be the true one. And the arguments now to be used are put forward only for the benefit of the few who are willing to admit the existence of faculties far superior to reason, and of knowledge far more certain than any conclusions reached by intellectual processes. They are, in fact, the arguments which follow from the assumption that Plato had modelled his doctrines upon the ancient Wisdom-religion of the Vedas—that frankly transcendental philosophy which, in aim and result, if not in method, is the very antithesis of most of our speculations. These arguments, I think, not only confirm the interpretation I have adopted: they will also be found to explain, as nothing else can, the peculiar account Plato has given of those "Pythagorean sciences" which educate the soul for "Philosophy," and of the Dialectic which is the coping-stone of the whole educational edifice.

In Chapter VI I have already given a very short account of the Vedantist conception of reality. Reference to this account will show how closely the Hindu ontology corresponds with Plato's. There is the same conception of this phenomenal world and all our knowledge of it as illusory and unreal; the same assumption of a far higher world of reality and a possible wisdom or real knowledge of it; the same insistence upon the necessity of a process of conversion, or turning round of the soul, and of its escape from the confining cave of ordinary human life. Usually, it is true, this latter is presented, not as the cave of social life, but as the dungeon of physical existence. The "political analogy," which appealed so strongly to the Greek mind, was much less interesting to the Hindus; they spoke, it is true, of the necessity of the free soul making its escape "from the city of the nine gates," but they meant by this merely the limitations of our earthly senses and faculties. Yet they did not fail to insist upon the necessity of shaking off social cares and interests: indeed, this is one of the fixed conditions of liberation. He who would find wisdom must, in some way or other, for a shorter or longer period, withdraw from the world and all its pursuits; for only

when the worldly faculties have sunk to rest can the spiritual faculties be awakened. In another way, also, it may be noted that the conception of the bound prisoners in the cave is one of the essential conceptions of the Vedic philosophy. Everything which we normally perceive, whether in the outer world or in our own thoughts, is either a projection or a reflection of " ideas " which are only real in another sphere.[1] We are therefore said, both in our perceptions and in our thoughts, to " have our backs to the light " ; the Indian imagery is here identical with Plato's.

Very significant, also, is the similarity between the Indian and the Platonic conceptions of the ultimate divine Reality. In other dialogues Plato speaks of the Creator or Architect of the Universe ; in the " popular " books of the *Republic*, as in the chapters on religion in the Laws, he speaks of God just as we do—a personal God ; but in the deepest expressions of his faith he uses only the impersonal terms " the Good " or " the Idea of the Good " to express " that which is the source of all life and being," that which possesses " the miraculous superiority of actually transcending real existence." In our religion, as in most, it is almost blasphemous to assert that the Divine Being is not a personal God, and that the God we worship is only a mode of the Godhead presented in order to come within our comprehension. But in the religion of Vedanta any other conception would be impossible, and itself irreverent. Personality is part of " the lower nature " of the very God of very God. In this " lower nature " the Divine has a thousand forms and a thousand names, expressing all the perfect attributes of Fatherhood and Motherhood, of Creator and Protector, Lover and Friend. But the Supreme *Being*, the source of *all* life and reality, transcends personality. The name for It is Brahm ; its essence cannot be described or conceived by human intellect ; no Seer of Reality can tell us more than that It is absolute existence, absolute consciousness, absolute harmony—the only Real, the only True, the only Good. And this is Plato's conception too. Like the Vedantins, he rises above theology when he draws near

[1] To explain fully this Indian doctrine of projection and reflection is outside my scope. Students of Vedanta are probably familiar with the cardinal doctrine that Ideas which are real in Akriti (or in Gnana) are reflected in the Chitta-akasa, and projected in the Buddhi-akasa, both of which belong, so far, to Prakriti and Avidya.

to " the very goal of the really knowable universe," to " that which actually transcends real existence," to that which neither he can describe nor we understand. His Ultimate is the Ultimate of the Vedas : the Unmanifest, the Unqualified, beyond Being and beyond Not-being, " not form, nor the unformed—yet both and more," " ineffable, invisible, by word and thought uncompassed."

The similarity, however, is most marked in relation to the peculiar faculty by which alone knowledge of reality can be attained. I do not think there is a single phrase or conception in Plato's account of Nous which does not find its exact parallel in the Vedic teaching concerning " the spirit which lies hid within the soul of man." This faculty " of divine substance " is said to be buried or covered over by our preoccupations and interests. It must break through a veil of darkness : it lies " coiled up " within the soul, and must be aroused from its long sleep ; the soul that contains it must be turned round in order that it may take up its own appropriate task of gazing upon reality. For its nature is to *know :* its name is the Knower : it is, in fact, not only potentially but actually all-knowing, so that its " learning " is but a process of remembering—a kind of " anamnesis," as Plato also calls it.

" Then there must be some art by which it can be educated, that is, awakened." So Plato asserts ; and then proceeds to define the method of this art. And it is here that the analogy of the Hindu doctrine becomes most interesting and most illuminating. For it is just this " art of awakening " which the Hindu sages have for centuries elaborated and proclaimed, and it is in this elaboration that we find the clue to Plato's " higher education " of the soul, and his extraordinary Dialectic. I will describe the Hindu art as shortly as I can, and then show its connection with Plato's system.

As true religion is the Dharma of the soul—that which binds it to God—so it may also be called Yoga—literally, yoking, or uniting. But the latter is generally used to express, not the condition of union (that is called liberation or realisation or bliss), but the process by which the soul unites itself with God—or, as we may paraphrase it, the path of religion. It must not be thought, however, that there is only one process or path : there are several, differing in detail, but all alike leading to the goal

of realisation. And of these paths three stand out, distinct, clearly defined, and fully elaborated: they are—Karma Yoga, or the way to union by right action and dispassionate performance of all duty; Bhakti Yoga, or the way of devotion to a personal God; and Gnana Yoga, or the way of full discernment and wisdom. Of these, none can be called higher or more sure than the rest. But the last-named is perhaps, in our view at any rate, the hardest;[1] and it is this one which, in the main, Plato is expounding. We must, therefore, examine this path more closely.

Let us suppose a man or woman to be already prepared, by right conduct and right desire and a fixed determination to find the Good, for entrance upon one of the paths of union. That is to say, let us suppose that he feels that he has reached the point at which he can, and, indeed, must, turn his back upon the world and the flesh, and, becoming a true Sannyasin,[2] or apprentice to religion, devote himself utterly to the quest of spiritual realisation. He will then be led, by his whole character and the general set of his mind, to choose one or other of the paths, and to seek a teacher on the path chosen. If his interests and mental qualities fit him for "Philosophy," or the path of wisdom, he will attach himself to an enlightened Guru[3] or teacher, who has trodden this path, and he will give up his life to learning the lessons taught.

The first step will be to learn submission and acquire Shraddha, or unswerving faith—submission to his teacher, and faith in him, as well as faith in the goal. And, as it is not the teacher who can drag the pupil up the steep ascent, but the pupil's own will and effort which must raise him, so he must become filled with an intense and overmastering determination to win his way—a desire for God "as strong as a drowning man's desire for air to breathe."

[1] The hardest, for us; for in the Christian religion Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga are, of course, the paths proclaimed and made familiar. The Gnana Yoga is neither taught nor known to most Christians. Perhaps, too, we instinctively dislike it; for it appears, superficially, to be the path of self-help, and dependence upon oneself and one's own efforts only, whereas Bhakti Yoga is more obviously the way of God's help, or dependence upon His mercy and love. Of this more in a later chapter.

[2] "Sannyasin," literally "the renouncer"; the disciple who has turned his back upon the world in order to seek God.

[3] "Guru," literally "the dispeller of darkness," or one who removes the veil of ignorance from the spiritual eyes of the pupil.

He will then begin a series of mental exercises—extraordinarily difficult, but necessary if his thoughts are to be detached from all their usual preoccupations, and fixed habitually upon some few permanent and abiding conceptions. This training of the intellect or reason is a most important preparation; for, as a modern Hindu teacher[1] has said, "the Vedanta recognises the full value of the reasoning power of man, although it says that there is something higher than intellect; but the road lies through intellect." Moreover, by this process only can steady *concentration* be learned, to the exclusion of all distracting ideas; a habit of concentration which enables the mind to focus its attention for long periods upon what we may call the essential qualities of anything, without dissipating its thought upon the numerous accidental qualities. In this practice of mental concentration all kinds of objects are given for the mind to dwell upon, beginning with concrete things, and leading on to very abstract conceptions belonging to the most abstract sciences. But the practice has no "scientific aim" before it: it is not part of the teacher's intention that the pupil should think out further solutions of scientific or philosophical problems, or make additions to valuable scientific knowledge: what has he now to do with "achievements or results"? Apart from the creation of a certain mental habit and mental strength, the sole aim of the practice is to bring the mind nearer to the power of dwelling upon unity, that is, upon the one among the many, or oneness behind all differences.

This habit of concentration leads on to more and more prolonged *meditation*, upon deeper and deeper abstractions; "for the mind meditating is the nearest thing to spiritual life—the one moment in which we cease to be material." The subjects given for meditation range from words and their meaning to the most universal qualities of nature and their relations, and also the most fundamental attributes of human or divine excellence and their effects; and these are given to the pupil in a definite order. And the difference between the practice of concentration and that of meditation may be indicated thus: concentration is holding the mind firmly upon some object of thought, and allowing only the strictly appropriate percepts and concepts to enter within the range of attention; while meditation implies

[1] The late Swami Vivekananda.

an unbroken flow of knowledge concerning a particular object of thought.

But let it be noted that throughout this educational process it is the *mind* alone—the human faculty of intellect—which is being trained : the faculty for which the general term in Sanskrit is Manas, and the special term, expressing the highest combination of thought and will, is Buddhi. And the whole purpose of the education is to harmonise the mind-stuff, Chitta, as it is called, into a condition of stillness, steadiness and freedom from bewildering cross-currents which distract attention, so that all its particles, as it were, may be arranged in the most orderly and uniform way, and are thus likely to offer the least possible resistance to the outflow of the deeper power which is yet to be awakened. This condition of polarisation of the mind-stuff by concentration and meditation is called in the Sanskrit " one-pointedness."

But the educational process is not yet fully described. Besides concentration and meditation, there is another process which sometimes appears as a final exercise, sometimes as a necessary concomitant or characteristic of the mental training from beginning to end. It is called *discrimination*, and means specifically the practice and power of distinguishing between what is accidental and what is essential, what is transitory and what is permanent, what is unreal and what is real. It resembles a logical process, but it is a moral as well as an intellectual practice, just as the highest form of mind, Buddhi, is moral as well as intellectual. And—a point to be emphasised specially—it is always a *negative* process, a method of arriving at truth by constant criticism and rejection ; for this reason it is almost always connected with the simple phrase (into which so much of the Hindu philosophy is compressed)—" Neti, Neti," " Not this, Not this," or more fully, " This and that and the other must be discarded as unreal."

Now when the pupil's mind is at last prepared by this education in concentration and meditation, with its coping-stone of discrimination, the awakening of a super-conscious and supermental faculty takes place, and a condition is reached to which the name " Samadhi " is applied in the Sanskrit—a condition of trance-like vision, or super-conscious intuition—in which truth and reality are at last *seen* by the eye of the spirit—the *Atman*,

which is one in substance with the source of all that is true and good. Then the pupil has reached the goal, and *knows* and is wise.[1]

Let the reader compare this brief account of the Gnana Yoga, or Way of Wisdom of the Vedas, with the education of the Philosopher as described by Plato, and judge for himself how far the two are analogous. The analogy is not perfect. Plato has worked out a form of Yoga along lines which are characteristic of Greek thought and of his own philosophical attitude. His ladder of Pythagorean sciences is not, as far as I know, described in the writings of the Vedic commentators; and many other details are probably the product of his own thought. But it is difficult to read any account of the Hindu Yoga without realising how close it is to the Platonic scheme, and how clearly it illumines the Platonic conceptions. It seems to settle quite definitely the teaching which Plato is trying to make plain by his analogy of the ascent from the cave to the upper world, and by his figure of the divided line. The Gnana Yoga explains, as nothing else does, the provinces and powers belonging to the two segments of the upper half of the line, to which Plato assigns the names "understanding" and "Nous." Of these, the lower segment belongs to some human mental faculty, refined into a condition very different from ordinary thought or intelligence. It is the Buddhi made one-pointed—withdrawn by meditation to the study of the most refined abstractions. While the highest segment is plainly the province of the super-mental or spiritual faculty of direct intuition—or, as the Hindu philosophers would say, direct recognition of the reality which by right belongs to it; the province, in fine, of the Atman which is one with God, of the Nous which is one with the Knower of all reality.

But most of all, I think, does the Gnana Yoga help us to understand that most puzzling thing, the Platonic Dialectic.

[1] The Sanskrit terms for these three processes, Concentration, Meditation, and Direct Vision, are—Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi; and the three together are called Samyama, and are a preparation for the final Samadhi (Nirbija), which is also called Moksha, or the bliss of perfect freedom and supreme wisdom. The process of discrimination is called Viveka.

It is to be noted that there are two forms of Samadhi, a higher and a lower. The lower is transitory, and gives flashes of intuition only; the higher is, or can at will be made, permanent. The condition of trance-like absorption, into which Socrates is said to have passed at will, seems to have had a very close resemblance to Samadhi.

This, like Philosophy itself, seems to have a double meaning. At one time it appears to be a mere logical process, always critical and destructive, and therefore very dangerous in the hands of boys and young people, because it can so easily be perverted to the negation of anything, whether good or bad—" a puppy-like tearing to pieces of everything," as Plato says. At another time it appears to be a peculiarly exalted process of arriving at the threshold of the highest wisdom—an almost sacred method of reaching the door of reality. But the " discrimination " of the Vedic Yoga has exactly these characteristics : any fool can play with it, and make himself an atheist by its misuse ; for it is so easy to be critical and negative, and to say " Neti, Neti," in reference to all orthodox convictions or accepted estimates. But in the hands of the man prepared by long discipline, true in his purpose and steadfast in his aim, it is the one safe and necessary instrument by which the covering of the soul's eye can be torn away, and its path of vision cleared of all the falsities and errors which becloud it. Is not this the exact prototype of that " Midwife's Art "[1] to which Socrates laid claim, and which, exposing error by the process of question and cross-question, at last opened the way for truth to emerge ?

And yet, it is not the final process, but only the highest of the preparatory processes. The final one is sight itself, the instantaneous passage of Nous or Atman—the Knower—into its own kingdom of wisdom : the union of the spirit with the Sun of Righteousness of which it is itself a spark. Plato has no special name for this highest state. He calls it philosophy or wisdom, and he calls it true happiness or bliss. But I do not think he has any term equivalent to the word Samadhi in its highest sense of permanent union with God. Some of his Neo-Platonic followers used the term " ecstasy " as an equivalent for the lower form of Samadhi. But this does not express the full meaning. For the final Samadhi (technically called the seedless Samadhi, or the condition in which all the seeds of Karma are burnt away),

[1] Socrates called his dialectic a " Techne Maieutike," literally, the art of a midwife ; or, as we may paraphrase it, the art of bringing the faculty of discernment to the birth. This, in his hands, was a practical application to the minds of others of the negative process of discrimination, very appropriate to a " Guru " or spiritual teacher, that is, " one who removes the veil of darkness from the spiritual eyes of the pupil."

is something permanent and abiding: a fixed condition of eternal certainty, unaltered by any return of the soul to the ordinary affairs of life. And this, at any rate, agrees with the condition finally realised by Plato's Philosopher King.

## CHAPTER IX

THE END OF BOOK VII OF THE *REPUBLIC*. THE DISCIPLE'S RETURN TO ACTIVE LIFE. THE PHILOSOPHER'S RETURN TO THE WORLD. THE POSSIBLE SALVATION OF SOCIETY.

THREE points remain for discussion in connection with Plato's ordering of the perfect life. There is first the ordinance by which the disciple is compelled to break off his meditative studies after five years, and return to active life for fifteen years—from the age of thirty-five to the age of fifty. There is, secondly, the ordinance by which the fully enlightened philosopher is compelled to return to the cave of worldly life for a shorter period, after he has attained God-knowledge. And there is, thirdly, the question of the social purpose involved in this second return.

I have already explained that the Indian system of spiritual development distinguishes three chief ways to salvation: the way of devotion, the way of service or work, and the way of wisdom. These three represent different pathways to union with the divine; but the way of wisdom is not and never can be independent of the way of work, since doing or service must form a part of every good life, as well as learning and knowing. In fact, the *Bhagavad Gita* explicitly identifies the two paths: they are different aspects of a single path. The apparently sharp antagonism between the life of unselfish service and the life of self-centred contemplation had led to exactly the same controversies among the ancient Indians as have been familiar to Christians since apostolic times—the controversies regarding the relative merits of faith and works, or wisdom and works. The solution of the antagonism is given very fully in the *Gita*, Books III to VI; it may be summarised in the following quotations:—

> "Even as the unknowing toil, wedded to sense,
> So let the enlightened toil, sense-freed, but set
> To bring the world deliverance and its bliss. . . .
> There is a task of holiness to do,

Unlike world-binding toil, which bindeth not
The faithful soul ; such earthly duty do,
And thou shalt well perform thy heavenly duty. . . .
Regard as true Renouncer him that makes
Worship by work, for who renounceth not
Works not as Yogin. So is that well said
' By works the votary doth rise to faith,
And saintship is the ceasing from all works.'
Because the perfect Yogin acts—but acts
Unmoved by passions and unbound by deeds,
Setting result aside."

It will thus be seen that, even on the path of wisdom, the way of " worship by work " has its place, and that a double place : first as a preparation for the saintship of the seer ; secondly, as a never-ending function of the fully enlightened soul. In the language of Vedanta, " no one can be a good Gnani (devotee of wisdom) unless he is also a good Karmi (devotee of work) " ; and the essence of Karma Yoga is that the soul thus learns to serve the world in obedience to one motive only—the love of God or of Good—and to perform all duty for the sake of God's other children, never for his own sake. In this way he becomes " free from fruit of works," free from the endless Karma of self-interest, from the waves of reaction which, through the long chain of our mortal lives, beat back upon the self as the consequence of its persistent self-seeking. On the other hand, the wisdom-devotee is sometimes said, it is true, to " cease from all works," or to be " quit of work " ; but this means only that his actions no longer bind him by producing results in which his self-interest is entangled, nor by sowing seeds of desire which will some day be the inexorable causes of further action. Unlike our actions, his acts are all pure—the pure half of activity, the act without reaction, the doing, without desire for any result of the deed for himself.

" What work he does is work of sacrifice
Which passeth purely into smoke and ash
Consumed upon the altar. All's then God."

The " bondage of deeds " and the " taint of deeds " have disappeared for one who does all for the glory of God. But his work, his " task of holiness," remains to the end—his never-finished task of " bringing the world deliverance and its bliss." No political motive appears here : there is no question of his

coming back to the world to direct, administer, or rule. The enlightened soul comes back to save his world; he does so because this is his nature's law, because only so can he fulfil his heavenly purpose—and God's purpose—of delivering the humanity of which he is a part, of saving his fellow-men who are literally one with him.

Now the old Indian method of spiritual training combined the lessons of Karma Yoga with those of Gnana Yoga in a natural sequence. Every good normal life was to be divided into four periods (known as the four Ashramas). The first twenty-five years were the student days, or the years of education of the soul by unconscious habituation to good. The second twenty-five years were the period of active life as householder, citizen, administrator. Then, at the age of fifty, began the search for knowledge of reality; and finally, for the few souls which found the goal, there followed the last stage, "of those who see the truth and teach it," of those whose knowledge has made them free, and whose freedom consists in doing God's work for the world. Now in the second of these periods of life, the good soul learned at least part of the lesson of Karma Yoga—to work, but forget self in the work; and it learned the lesson naturally and gradually, helped at every step by the changes of normal life. The good householder did not violently "renounce" his care for his children: the children grew beyond need of his care. The good business man did not forcibly tear himself away from his business interests, the good administrator did not relentlessly turn his back upon his duties: but both the interests and the duties passed naturally into the hands of the younger generation, leaving him free. His care for results of work came naturally to an end as the significance of all results changed; the "world" began to leave him, not he the world. And so, at the age of fifty or perhaps later, he was free in fact as well as in feeling, ready to turn to the one task which has no worldly results at all. Only one serious tie might perhaps remain—his wife: he was not allowed to leave her, even to seek God, without her consent. But (once more, if the life had been well lived, but not otherwise) she would be with him in his quest, at one with him in aim, and at one with him in freedom from the ties of earlier days.

Now Plato, the disciple of Socrates, was occupied always with the path of wisdom. In accepting his master's cardinal doctrine

—Virtue is Knowledge—he had accepted also the Gnana Yoga or Wisdom Religion which is implicit in that doctrine ; and the *Republic* shows how he worked it out in detail. But, like the Vedantins, he knew that the Karma Yoga or Religion of Work was also implicit in the doctrine—as inseparable from it as the virtue which is knowledge is inseparable from the activity which is conduct. And so, like the Vedantins again, he combined the two paths. If the key to the gateway of knowledge is the dialectic of the mind, then the key to the gateway of pure activity or selfless service is the dialectic of the heart ; the one is perfect discrimination between the true and the untrue learned by thought and meditation, the other is perfect discrimination between the worthy and the worthless learned by action and discipline. Inevitably, therefore, Plato must make room, in the life of his apprentice to philosophy, for this training in the path of activity. He does not follow the old Indian rule for normal lives : very likely he did not know it ; certainly it did not quite fit in with his purpose. For he is concerned with the training, not of a normal soul, but of a " rare and picked nature which shows itself from the very first to be fit for philosophy." From its life, as from the life of every religious devotee, the ordinary ties and interests of family, household and business have been removed ; all the life is dedicated to the single quest. Yet, even for such a soul, his first intention was to adopt an order of education almost exactly corresponding to the Indian order. In the sixth book we were given to understand that, after the education by habit of the student days, all the years up to the age of fifty would be given to practical work in the world ; in the seventh book, however, it is decided " on second thoughts " that the disciple will be too old at fifty to undertake the " dianoetic " exercises preparatory to the wisdom-dialectic. Therefore it is ordained that five years (from thirty to thirty-five) shall be devoted to these exercises, the learner then returning to active life till the age of fifty. In this way the necessary discipline of Karma Yoga is combined with the Gnana Yoga : the moral dialectic is learned, the necessary accompaniment of the dialectic of the mind. The disciple learns to " work unfettered by results of work " : he proves himself able to meet the tests of the attraction of desire and the call of ambition.

So much for the first ordinance, by which the Philosopher-

apprentice is compelled to break off his studies and devote fifteen of his most vigorous years to active administrative life. But the second ordinance raises far graver difficulties. Plato is quite emphatic in declaring that the Master-Philosopher, after his enlightenment is complete, must also return to " the underground den " of our citizen life, there to work among the prisoners he had left. There is no question here of test or training : *his* education is finished ; he has run his race and reached the goal. And the goal is everything : it is the consummation of good, the haven of perfect peace and happiness—oneness with the very source of all good. Why then must he, even for a few years, leave this perfect life, and " come back to a life which is less good "—even to the shadows and illusions of the prison-house of mortality ? The obvious answer—if my interpretation of Plato's philosophy is correct—is that he can only return to be a spiritual teacher and guide, " to bring the world deliverance and its bliss " by leading others to the light. For that is the sole work of every Yogi, of every seer of truth everywhere and at all times. That is the whole of their " task of holiness." There is no question of political authority : no question of ruling or directing a State. No true seer is a politician ; that is almost as alien to his high calling as money-making.

But unfortunately this is just what Plato does *not* say. On the contrary, he explicitly tells us that the perfect Philosopher must return to the cave to *rule*. Plato leaves us in no doubt about this. The philosopher's final function on earth is definitely a political function : his *kingship* is the fact which is emphasised. His function as a teacher is quite secondary : we are told that he will " train up others to be like himself," but this is merely a part of his work as a ruler. Moreover, the whole argument of the *Republic* has led up to this conclusion. Side by side the State and the individual soul have been " worked up in a style of faultless beauty " ; the secret of their perfection is the same for both : it is the unquestioned rule of wisdom. The righteousness of the soul is found and is secured for all time under the government of true knowledge of the good ; the righteousness of the State is found and is secured only under the government of the possessor of this knowledge. That is the first and last condition of " making the ideal State a waking reality and not a dream."

Before passing on to the explanation of this, I would draw attention to two points. The one is that the finished philosopher is *compelled* to return as a ruler, not because he wishes to do so, but because he must. The other is that he *only* returns to rule in the State which has given him his training, and is like him in simplicity of aim and of life. He does *not* return to rule in any State or society now existing. The first point I have dealt with in a note at the end of this chapter ; the second I will deal with fully, after I have first made clear the intention of the ordinance itself and its political purpose.

We may admit, at the outset, that the ordinance is quite in keeping with Plato's invariable conception of the Good. He cannot think of either Nous or the Good except as an ever-active, energising cause of good. Goodness for him is righteousness : it is perfect morality or virtue : it is excellence in action, not excellence in abstraction. And so, just as later we are told that the utterly unrighteous soul, possessed and debased by the tyranny of evil, does not reach the lowest level of unrighteousness until he is forced to function actively as a veritable Tyrant among men ; so here we are told that the utterly righteous soul, possessed and ennobled by the royalty of good, does not fulfil his righteousness unless he, too, is forced to function as a veritable King among men.

But further, although so opposed to the present conception of a Yogi's function, Plato's ordinance is, *in the form in which he gives it,* exactly consonant with the original purpose of the old Indian rule of life. In very early days, the whole scheme of spiritual training through the four Ashramas or periods of life was designed to produce the Rajarshi or Rishi Rajah or Sage Ruler, who should be the all-knowing king of his people, guiding them after the pattern of the divine wisdom which he had found. That was the full ideal—the perfect individual ruling in the good State. But in later days, this ideal became unattainable. The evolution of the world, involving, as it does, the ever-deeper descent of the spirit into matter, involves also the passing away of the spiritual simplicity which made possible the Rishi's rule. We are now moving through a darker age, the Pralaya or twilight of evolution, the age of deep immersion in the manifold, of worship of complexity, of ever-growing self-will, of more and more complete alienation from spiritual rule, of fast-increasing diffi-

culties, therefore, which we must meet by our own efforts even as we make them by our own desires. In this age, the full spiritual education must continue—where it can ; but its goal is no longer the Rishi Rajah but the Yogi, the enlightened individual—spiritual guide still for all who will, but political ruler of none. The perfect State, in which the individual ideal and the social ideal were fused into one, has disappeared : there remains only the goal of spiritual royalty for the individual soul, in its own realm of the spirit, its true supremacy unrecognised by the world, its possessor neither desiring nor expecting such recognition.

Now Plato's conception, in general and in detail, is exactly identical with this old Indian doctrine. In the *Politicus* he defines the perfect king or ruler ; and there he tells us that his mark is the possession of real knowledge or wisdom, and by the light of this wisdom he guides the human flock under his care. He is not an active ruler as we think of a ruler : he *knows* and directs, but does not actively administer. He makes no laws : there are no laws in his State. There is only the single principle of guidance—his own sure knowledge of what is good. All the citizens are the agents or instruments of his rule. And his " kingly art " is the art of weaving the characters of all after the pattern of the good. But this perfect Monarchy of wisdom is no longer possible on earth. Once, in the age of Saturn, it was realised, and then humanity was guided by divine rulers, even as the universe was guided by the divine Steersman. Now all is changed ; the evolution of the world is in its own hands, and is all imperfect and irregular. Humanity must manage itself as best it can. And, while the dark age lasts, only inferior forms of government are possible, good in so far as they resemble the perfect form, bad in proportion as they depart from it. But even the best now need to be hedged about and safeguarded by fixed Laws : only the divine form of government—the rule of pure wisdom—may be a real autocracy, free from laws and dependent upon its own will alone.

In this account, given in the *Politicus*, we have the exact Indian picture of the Rajarshi, and the Indian account also of the reason of his disappearance. The " self-willed movement of the universe " is the Indian Pralaya or dark twilight of evolution, through which the world is now passing.

In the *Republic*, the same conception runs through the whole

account. But the centre of interest is not now the Rishi Rajah or Philosopher-King or Sage Ruler of a State,[1] but the Kingly Philosopher, the Yogi, who has become the perfect ruler of his own soul. They are one and the same, of course; but the emphasis in the *Republic* is on the Philosopher, not on the King. It is *his* training as an individual, *his* righteousness as a perfect soul, which forms the central theme: his realisation of Nous and truth as the secret of self-rule, the source of the soul's harmony, the guide to its eternal life. But his possible political function is not forgotten, since every Yogi is a Rishi Rajah unrecognised; his place as *the* ruler of mankind, Rajah as well as Rishi, is left open for him still, "at some far-off time, in some distant place." When human society has once more become like him, in simplicity of soul and singleness of purpose, then he will be its king once more. When "the canvas has been wiped clean" of all existing worldly habits and character, and society has literally been born again, then he will leave his own world of reality and light and will come back to the cave as "political" guide and ruler—not because he desires to rule, but because that is the law of his being and the law of the being of the society which is at one with him.

The two vexed questions are answered now: the possibility of realising the Ideal State, and the nature of Plato's "political interest" in the *Republic*. And the answers may be put in this way:—

There is only one constitution of soul belonging to all human existing things—to every society of men as well as to every individual man. This is the constitution of the three Qualities. There is only one good condition for any soul so constituted. This is the Dikaiosune which consists in the right ordering of the work and functions of the Qualities. There is only one power which can make this good condition not only good but perfect and unchangeable and eternal; which can, in fact, make the ideal real: this is the power of wisdom. There is only one kind of wisdom: it is the knowledge of reality attained by Nous.

[1] The term "philosopher-king" is an almost exact translation of the term Rishi Rajah; but, although it is in the *Republic* that Plato links together the double conception, it is in the *Politicus* that we get the definition of his function. The *Politicus* was the second of a series of three works promised by Plato, on the Sophist, the Statesman, and the Philosopher respectively. The last was never written under that title. But the *Republic* might very well serve as the work needed to complete the triad.

All true science depends from this ; all true art of action or of conduct. All other forms of science or of art (the forms the world knows) are fallible, relative, blent with falsehood and subject to unending change.

There is, therefore, only one true source of guidance for human life : it is Nous, the knower of reality. This holds good for the life of the individual soul and the life of the social soul alike. But there is this difference. Every human soul possesses Nous—hidden and unknown, but ever-present. But in the social soul Nous is not immanent, except as a possession of the individual souls who form society.

For every individual soul the awakening of Nous, and therefore the attainment of wisdom, and therefore the realisation of Dikaiosune, as a permanent and unshakable condition, are all possible in this or any life. For every individual soul, therefore, the Ideal Condition is an ever-present possibility. But for Society no such awakening of Nous is possible ; but fully enlightened individual souls, one or more, *may* appear in any society ; and if any one such should appear, then, indeed, Nous would be present, wisdom would be present, the key to Righteousness would be present, and there would be at least the possibility of making the Ideal State real, as an actual Polity. But this last step could not be taken in the world as it is. The enlightened one could only function as King in a society fit for his rule ; that is, in a Society so fully at one with his spiritual purpose as to be willing to submit everything to him, to lay aside all other aims, to be to him as a group of little children taking guidance from an all-trusted father. Human society may have been like this once : it may some day be like this again. Once, before the fall, the human family was ruled in this way : its kings were also philosophers, Rajarshis, sage and saint and king combined. But since then, the world has eaten of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, and has taken its life into its own hands—for good *and* for evil. The age of the Rishi Rajah has gone : the age of the world's conscious descent into the manifold has come. We are all intertwined in the Qualities : their myriad tentacles hold us back from the simplicity which is the mark of the only perfect State. We must work our way upwards with the help of " second best constitutions," hemmed in with many laws ; the perfect State, with its single rule of the

Good, waits for us, a " pattern laid up in heaven," to be reached when we have made our own way through the twilight of illusions. It, and its Wisdom-King, are not for the world—yet. " Nous is the possession of the gods, and perhaps a very few men." But it, and its King, remain the eternal ideal, the one perfect State :—

> " There shall no end be hindered, no hope marred,
> No loss be feared. . . . There shines one rule,
> One steadfast rule. But shifting souls have laws
> Many and hard."

And must have them : laws which wisdom would never need, but which must be imposed upon us " by some power within the State," and accepted by us in faith, if our State is to be good in any sense at all.

Someday, " in some far-off place and age," the Ideal Kingdom may again be made real. But that will only be when the world has become capable of recognising the true Ruler and his divine wisdom ; and then, laying aside its self-will, it will once more submit itself gladly to his rule. And he will be any one among its citizens who has seen the light ; but he will need much persuasion before he will consent to rule, and his rule will only be possible because all his fellow-citizens are so like him, so entirely at one with his spiritual purpose, that they will willingly give up all direction into his hands, for the sake of their own spiritual progress. He will himself then be the product of the " good State," the State in which all education, every law, every ordinance, are directed to the one end—the fitting of souls for philosophy. And in such a State—" the State which we have been building up " in the *Republic*—the Philosopher will rule, both because he can, and because he cannot do otherwise.

I imagine that most readers will vehemently dissent from this conclusion. How should it be otherwise ? We read the *Republic* firmly expecting to find in it the picture of a social Utopia : its accepted title—the Politeia—is our warranty for this ; and the book does not disappoint us. Its fascination lies in its daring political proposals : the final enthronement of the philosopher-autocrat is the coping-stone of them all—paradoxical, no doubt, and a very questionable solution of the problem of good government ; but quite an attractive idea, and quite in keeping with

the ideals latent in the minds of most of us. Is it to be robbed of its interest, and subordinated to the hackneyed theme of personal righteousness ? We do not want the book to be turned into a treatise on mystical morality : we prefer the political interpretation with its obvious applications. And, after all, was not Plato a politician too ? Was not his political interest as practical as it was keen ? He did not merely write about political ideals : he spent (so we are told) some years in trying to carry out his ideas in practical form in the State of Dionysius, who for a time believed in him. And his last, and longest, treatise was the elaborate, detailed and entirely practical work the *Laws*.

Yes ; Plato was a politician—in a sense ; but we are forgetting that he was a philosopher first. The goal of philosophy—wisdom or knowledge of the Good—was all in all to him ; but the Sun of Wisdom will light up everything, the whole conduct of human life, social, political, individual. There stands the ideal—the same for all life. So speaks the philosopher. But, when we come down to the level of the practicable and the possible—to practical politics, in fact—we find that the ideal is, for present social life, impossible ; then let us aim at the best copy we can—the Good State, built on the lines of the Perfect State, but very different from it.

Now this difference[1] between the Perfect State, which is unattainable, and the Good State, which is a present possibility, is just the difference between the philosophy and the politics of Plato. In the *Republic*, Plato the philosopher speaks ; in the *Laws*, Plato the politician. In the *Republic* we have the absolute ideal, and its centre is the Good, and the vision of the Good by Nous. In the *Laws*, the ideal disappears from view : the vision of the Good is gone, Nous and its supremacy are gone, the Royal Philosopher is gone.[2] In the *Republic* we begin with the Good State, and rise to the Ideal—to be plainly told that it is, for human society, *only* a pattern laid up in the heavens. In the *Laws*, we begin and end with the Good State, and never rise above it at all. And the difference, the immeasurable difference, between the possible Good State and the unattainable Perfect

[1] This vital distinction is dealt with very fully in a note at the end of Chapter X.

[2] In the *Laws*, only the good Guardians remain ; and the best of these form a secret nocturnal council for the carrying out of the fixed laws.

State is just this : in the latter, Nous with its direct knowledge of the Good inspires every activity, bound by no law, needing no fetters, no constitution, no ordinances ; fusing all into a perfect unity of will and purpose by its own oneness with the Sun of Righteousness, making the whole immortal and unchangeable by its own hold on the principle of eternal life ; while in the former laws are everywhere, fetters and ordinances fix all activities by force—as well as they can—and the whole depends for its continuance in the path of goodness upon the implicit obedience of all—even of the rulers—to the given constitution imposed by the original law-giver.

We cannot understand the *Republic* unless the distinction between the Perfect State and the Good State is kept clear. It is only because it is *not* observed that we feel baffled by Plato's final abandonment of his ideal as a working model for society, and are unwilling to admit that he never intended us to think of it as a political possibility. We do not notice how we are led up from the Good State described in the early books, to the Perfect Constitution described in the philosophical books which form the centre of the work ; nor do we notice how definitely we fall back again to the lower level when we return to the " political interest " of the eighth and ninth books. But Plato is not to blame ; it is our own wilful misunderstanding. He tells us plainly enough that the ideal cannot be regarded as a possibility for social life until society itself is transformed ; he tells us hardly less plainly that the Philosopher cannot be expected to rule in any State except the State which exists for the sake of Philosophy ; and his whole teaching should show us, even if he had never told us this, that the philosophic faculty of wisdom *cannot* function among the shadows of the cave, so long as it *is* the cave, and so long as we prisoners are absorbed in the shadows. For remember that the strange power of vision which, once awakened, can carry the purified soul into the world of true reality, and in that world can see and know all the eternal verities, is not a power of vision which can deal with " shadows in an alien territory." Our world of illusions is not its world. The man whose spiritual eye has opened to the light above comes back " dazed and a laughing-stock " to the cave of our worldly life. How could it fail to be so ? Let us admit that the Seer or Philosopher does, indeed, see through this life of ours, as none of us can ; but that

is because he sees beyond it, because his vision is of another life in another world. He sees the futilities with which we cumber our lives, the meaninglessness of many of the aims and efforts which we deem important, the pettiness of our ambitions and competitions and misunderstandings. But he sees these as unreal, as unimportant, as genuinely petty, by comparison with the things that matter—those things that make the stuff of a different life. If he is to see our affairs as they appear to us, then he must see them with our human eyes, not with his superhuman sight ; he must join us again on the path of pursuit, becoming literally one of us prisoners in the cave, subject to our limitations and shackles, compelled like us to think the shadows real. And then his " divine faculty " falls into abeyance : what has it to do with " shadows in an alien territory " ?

It is true, however, that Plato does say, in one passage (p. 520), that the Philosopher who comes back as a King " to the underground abode of men " will, " when he has grown accustomed to it, see ten thousand times better than the inhabitants of the den." But that is because it is *his own* State to which he returns—not ours : the Perfect State in which the myriad phantasies of desire and ambition which make up the life of *our* societies have been swept away, and all that remains are the habits and activities which genuinely reflect the Forms of Good and which the Philosopher has no difficulty in recognising as the reflections of " the beautiful and the right and the good which he has seen in their reality." He never asks us to believe that the Philosopher can or will be anything but " a shelterer behind a wall " in the politics of our States. Has he not plainly defined the Philosopher as one " who cannot possibly attach any importance to this life " ? Does not his whole teaching show that a Seer who is also a political mentor is a contradiction in terms ? The faculty whose awakening opens the door to truth is a faculty which can only function in its own world, among its own objects. The faculty which alone can know God and only God will not know anything about the not-God of political probabilities and social utilities ; the faculty which can guide us surely on the firm land of reality will not steer us at all in the sea of opinions. That is why the seer cannot also be politically wise. A St. Theresa does not carry her saintliness into her diplomacy ; a Socrates may be and must be made a better citizen by his " philosophy," but

never a better politician. How on earth could it be otherwise? For in this world their divine faculty of spiritual insight is blind; and its possessor is not only dazed when he returns to our darkness, but must remain dazed, a very laughing-stock to all sharp, practical people, so long as he stays in the darkness. In the Perfect State the case would be different. In a society in which all estimates of things worth having and worth doing were adjusted to the one supreme end, and in which all activities were thereby simplified into harmony with the outlines of the "real" world, the philosopher might feel so perfectly at home that, as Plato says, he could then "give proof that his calling is the highest calling," and that his ability far transcends all other abilities. But never in our imperfect societies; least of all in a democracy which must find its own way out of its complexities as a condition of its growth.

But enough now concerning the political mission of the Philosopher-King. There is, however, a very different mission ascribed to him, which we, at any rate, do not think of as political. In the individual soul the rule of wisdom is at once the cause of the perfect constitution of the soul, and the fulfilment of its spiritual salvation. In other words, the wisdom-governed man wins not only the harmony which is righteousness but also the salvation which is eternal peace. So, too, in reference to human society, Plato tells us that the Philosopher will not only rule his State but save it. We have seen that he cannot and will not rule it as its king until society is ready for his rule: that is, purged into his own singleness of aim and unity of desire. But, if he cannot rule it as king, may he not even now save it as teacher of that God-knowledge which is his title to sovereignty? May not society, here and now, be made regenerate by the power of pure religion?—for that is the deeper issue.

Plato's answer is quite plain. He does not separate the task of the saviour from the task of the ruler, the "salvation" of society from the "perfect ordering" of social life. The two stand and fall together; neither is possible until the whole character of society is changed. Human society cannot win either the harmony of ideal government or the peace of religion until it has returned to the condition of a little child, the condition of the idyllic society first sketched in the earlier books—and there discarded because it was so desireless and so passionless

as not to resemble existing social life at all. That is to say, human society will be capable of religion and of the salvation which religion alone can bring, when, and only when, it is ready for the full government of the autocrat of wisdom, when it has won its way through the worship of complexity, and has come back to simplicity—*not* the simplicity of childish innocence, but the simplicity of wise and full experience. And this cannot be until the deepest descent into matter is finished, and humanity has learned the lessons of the manifold, has, in fact, learned that the shadows of the puppets of the cave are *not* reality, that the objects of its desires and ambitions are illusions.

Is this only another way of saying that society can never be saved until it ceases to be what we know as human society? Undoubtedly: for is it not clear that any society which is prepared for the salvation of religion has already come to the end of the road of human progress and achievement, has already "risen above the Qualities" whose infinite variations make up the complexity which we call human life? The conversion of society is not a dream: it is a certainty which will surely be realised—at the last, "in some far-off age." But the day of its salvation will be the last day of society's life on earth; in the moment of its salvation human society will cease to be.

Plato saw this more clearly than we do. Many of us dream of our nation or society becoming religious in fact as well as in name—a veritable City of God fulfilling the law of Christ on earth. It is a possibility, we say, no matter how great the difficulties may be. But the religion which, in our dreams and our hopes, is to rule the world is not the religion which Plato had in his thought when he described the full perfecting of the soul's righteousness. It is not the final union with divine reality, which lifts the soul into another world, making it for ever "the spectator of all time and all existence," who therefore "cannot possibly take any interest in the affairs of men" in the way in which we citizens of earth take interest in them. When we speak of the possible conversion of society to religion, are we not thinking rather of the *reflection* of religion—the worship of God in faith, and the ordering of our normal activities, as honestly as may be, after the revealed pattern of righteousness, in so far as this does not entirely overthrow these normal activities? Are we not, in other words, thinking of the establishment of the Good State,

but not the Perfect State—that possible good condition for collective humanity in which right shall be accepted in faith—but not seen by direct vision—and established by good laws and ordinances—but not secured immutably by will made perfect by divine wisdom? We shall not cavil at Plato's refusal to allow the possibility of the wisdom-inspired State on earth, if we remember that, to him, religion, or the discovery of the knowledge of God, means freedom from *all* worldly interests—for ever; freedom from the chain of action and reaction, of birth and re-birth; freedom from life on earth. It means freedom from the very conditions, not of mortality only, but of life; it means liberation from the universe of the Qualities; it means taking the real and eternal in exchange for the quasi-real and perishable, the incorruptible in exchange for the corruptible. Shall humanity find this freedom? Yes; individual by individual, soul by soul, at any time, in any place. But collectively and as a society, only at the very end of its evolution; certainly not so long as it is bound to the world by its preoccupations and interests: not so long as the souls which are born into it are still imperfect souls, filled with the Tamas of desire and the Rajas of passion. When all the returning souls are purified from all but the last vestiges of the bonds which bring them back to the wheel of change, then at last the society of human souls will be ready for salvation.

*Note.—Concerning the Philosopher's compulsory return to the Cave.*

According to Plato, the perfect Philosopher is *compelled* to leave his life of contemplation and to return to the cave to work. Three reasons are indicated for this compulsion. Of these, two are simple and can be easily stated; the third is obscure, and will require more careful consideration.

First, it is an essential part of Plato's doctrine that, in a good State, the rulers must be those who are least willing to rule. "Only in the State which offers another and a better life than that of a ruler, will they rule who are truly rich, not in silver and gold, but in virtue and wisdom." The compulsion laid upon the Philosopher is thus a consequence of his unwillingness to take office.

Secondly, when Glaucon raises the question of the fairness of forcing the Philosopher to leave his perfect life for a life which is less good, he is told that this is perfectly fair, because it is the payment of a debt due to the Good State which has made the ascent to Philosophy possible. This is an obvious reason which Glaucon can understand. It is also in keeping with the Indian doctrine. I have already

pointed out that the old Vedic rule of the four Ashramas or periods of life was an ideal ordinance intended originally to educate genuine sage-princes who should administer their States disinterestedly according to Vedic principles, *after* they had attained to the condition of a true Yogi or Seer of reality. This duty of administration was, in a sense, a payment of a debt. Every human soul is considered to have three great debts to pay: they are known as Pitri-rin, Rishi-rin, and Deva-rin. Pitri-rin means the debt to ancestors and to society in return for the use of one's body and faculties; it can only be paid by service to society, and by leaving children properly equipped to continue the service. Rishi-rin means the debt to all the givers of culture, in return for the enjoyment of all the subtler elements of civilised life. This can only be paid by learning and by teaching. Deva-rin means the debt to the spirits of nature, by which our life is maintained; and this is only payable by real sacrifice and devotion and worship. The three debts may be described briefly as the debt to the spirit of humanity, the debt to the spirit of civilisation, and the debt to the spirit of the natural universe. All three debts are absolutely binding, and must be paid to the full before the soul is free from all social duties. It is quite in accordance with this ordinance that Plato ordains absolute subordination to society as the necessary payment of a debt. But, in the Eastern doctrine as in Plato's, it is always something more than this: service of humanity, of civilisation, and of the universe, is also a part of the perpetual manifestation of perfect goodness.

The third reason is much harder to explain; but I must try to explain it, because the passage concerning the unwilling return of the Philosopher to the cave, and his compulsory payment of a debt, has been regarded as a serious flaw in Plato's doctrine. It has even been seized upon as justifying the amazing statement[1] that Plato "entirely fails to appreciate the excellence of sacrifice"; that "according to his theory, to ask a man to forfeit some self-culture for the sake of social service will be wrong unless it can be claimed as payment of a debt: even then, while no injury, it is still from the individual's point of view regrettable. This is all due to the fact that his mind has never grasped that for a man to sacrifice himself for the community is good, not only for the community, but for the man too; he never grasped the excellence that is in sacrifice itself." I confess it is difficult to understand how one can read the *Republic* without realising that "the excellence that is in sacrifice itself" is the foundation upon which the whole religious life is built. Indeed, the sacrifice demanded of self and of all the self's enjoyments and interests is so extreme, so unlimited, that most of us turn away in despair: it is too high for us, we cannot attain to it. But I imagine the criticism arises from the fact that there is no *social* motive for the sacrifice required: the righteous man must give up everything (except the one thing needful)

[1] Rev. W. Temple, *Plato and Christianity*.

in order to save his own soul. Now let me meet this objection once for all. It has already been pointed out more than once that, in the Hindu doctrine, there are three chief paths to holiness or to God ; and of these three the two which we in the West understand are the path of self-denial in activity and the path of self-surrender in devotion—the way of Martha and the way of Mary, perhaps. At the present time, with our growing (though still lamentably weak) care for the social well-being, it is natural that the former path should appeal to us most. It is active : it produces obvious results : it helps both neighbours and the community : and its self-sacrifice is patent to all in the form of unselfish service. We even demand that the other path—that of devotion—shall also be marked by intelligible activity on behalf of others : by something more than mere prayer, at any rate. I suppose there has never been an age in the history of Christendom when the life of pure devotion was so little respected as now. Is it not easy, then, to understand the difficulty which Christians must find in appreciating the third great path—that of wisdom, or direct knowledge of God ? For in this the soul has no aim except to find and know and become one with God : this is the sole motive for sacrifice of self, the sole reason for every renunciation. And yet this path—so we are always told—is the highest and straightest, as it is certainly the hardest, of all the paths. I know it is difficult at first to conceive how this can be so. It seems so entirely self-centred : its process and aim appear to be—in spite of all self-abnegation—merely refined selfishness. Even so sympathetic a Christian as Mr. Temple cannot see in the philosopher's terrific discipline and struggle anything better than a kind of self-culture ! But is it not a little odd that we should be able to value sacrifice for the sake of the neighbour whom we have seen, but not able to appreciate it for the sake of God whom we have not seen ?[1] For this is the task set the " philosopher " : he is to find and unite with the Good, the giver of all life and all well-being ; he is to become holy, even as God is holy ; life must have no other aim to be compared with this ; it is to this goal that he must struggle, putting aside all else. And why ? Because this unknown Good may give him happiness ? But with such a motive he is bound to fail. No happiness-seeker can even enter the path. Is it not simply because, since the Good is all-good, the only reality, the only being, the only thing of which we can say " It is excellent in itself," therefore to become a part of it means becoming part of the very creative power of good ? And so the sacrifice which was necessary in the seeking goes on when the goal is found : " the excellence that is in sacrifice itself " becomes also the final happiness. The law of both is the same : it is to give,

[1] The obvious retort is, I admit, a valid one. If a man does not first show his love for the neighbour whom he has seen, we have a right to look askance at the supposed sacrifice for the unseen God. Certainly ; it is always admitted in the Vedanta teaching that no one can be a Yogi unless he is first a good Karmi. And Plato observes this condition. What else is the fifteen years' discipline between thirty-five and fifty but a long sacrifice for the sake of the community ?

and give, and give. So that in return more shall be added to us? Not in the least: in return, still more shall be asked of us.

This is the Platonic ideal of the philosopher who becomes *Righteous* and finds the Good, but is spurned, dishonoured, tortured and crucified on the way—and afterwards (Plato might have added) is libelled even by religious people as a mere seeker of self-culture. And when the goal is finally reached, the purified and all-seeing soul is "compelled to return to the underground abode" of ordinary humanity. "Because it is a debt to be repaid," Glaucon is told. But that is *not* the reason. Another answer is given to explain the rightness of the return: "You have forgotten, my friend, the purpose of the creator of our good State. He did not aim at making any one class in the State happy above the rest: the happiness was to be in the whole, and he bound the citizens by persuasion and necessity, making them benefactors of the State and therefore benefactors one of another; to this end he created them, not to please themselves, but to be his instruments in binding up the State." And the disciple of Socrates would certainly have added, if he had heard the modern criticism, "To this end also, in other forms, every soul has been created, and the power to become holy given to it: that it may at last do its work in binding up all souls into the unity of the Good."

The motive which leads the purged soul to long for nothing except union with the Good is never presented as a social motive, because it includes this in a much higher form. You must be a master before you can be the servant of all: you must be a son of God before you can help in his work of creating and maintaining all good: you must be pure before you can purify others: you must know the truth before you can enlighten the world: and you must discover your oneness with your neighbours before you can love them as yourself. The Royal Philosopher does not help the world as a disagreeable duty; nor even because he cares for and pities his neighbours. He works for them because they *are* himself: because every creature *is* the indivisible reality which he too is and which God is. There is no "otherness" anywhere. And he works, because activity and real existence are inseparable: whether he works here or elsewhere, as a visible helper or as an invisible spiritual force, makes no difference to him or to us. It is, however, a fact that no saint ever leaves his physical body until it gives him up; no saint leaves his place and work in the world until physical nature sets him free. Often his body is diseased, and physical existence a constant pain; that matters not at all; he never escapes to freedom by his own act, though escape is always within his power. For this reason it may be said that Plato has no need to compel his Philosopher to return. He would never go away—except in spirit. And his work in the cave would go on, so long as his body endured—and afterwards, so long as the cave itself endured and needed his care. For his archetype is the supreme Guardian of the Good, who never ends his work of "succouring the good and thrusting evil back."

" In the three wide worlds
I am not bound to any toil, no height
Awaits to scale, no gift remains to gain,
Yet I act here. And, if I acted not,
Earnest and watchful, those that look to me
For guidance, sinking back to sloth again
Because I slumbered, would decline from good,
And I should break earth's order and commit
Her offspring unto ruin."

# PART IV

# (BOOKS VIII TO X). THE DANGERS OF THE LOWER PATH

## CHAPTER X

### ANALYSIS OF THE *REPUBLIC*, BOOKS VIII AND IX. THE CAUSES OF THE DEGENERATION OF THE GOOD STATE AND OF THE GOOD MAN.

AT the beginning of the eighth book, Plato leads us back to "the point from which he had diverged" at the end of the fourth book, and proceeds to show how the humanly good man may fall away from "the aristocracy of virtue." This account of the possible degeneration of the righteous soul, and of the pitfalls which surround its path, has, of course, no application to the soul whose ascent has been described in the intervening books. We have now finished with the Royal Philosopher: for him there can be no pitfalls, no possibility of degeneracy. He sits unshakable on his throne of wisdom, safe in the stability of inspired certainty. But the humanly righteous man, aristocrat indeed, but not yet king, is never secure; the seeds of evil and of error are not all burnt out of his soul; his feet are not yet planted upon the rock of wisdom, but are still moving dangerously along the lower path; and if temptation assails him, even he may fall. As Plato puts it, he is still subject to the law of change which pertains to all things human, to everything not wholly divine: the Karmic law, as the Vedantins call it, which, at the end of a thousand years or more, will bring back from heaven to earth even the very best of souls, if these have not yet taken the final step which merges them entirely in the spiritual reality.

It must be constantly borne in mind, therefore, in reading

the remainder of the *Republic*, that we are back again on the human or "lower" level, and that we are dealing once more with both society and the individual soul in the form in which we ordinarily know them, namely, as compounds of the three qualities, whose condition may be called good or Sattvic when it consists in an equilibrium or harmony produced by the unquestioned authority of the best quality over the other two, and whose condition falls away from goodness just in so far as the equilibrium is disturbed by any usurpation of authority on the part of the two imperfect qualities. The causes and effects of disturbance, whether in a society or in the individual soul, are the theme of the eighth and ninth books. But the exposition has nothing to do with the individual or society which has risen above even the good or Sattvic condition.[1] It does not apply to the superhuman or spiritual perfection of the Philosopher-King, or of the really ideal but quite impossible society which is akin to him. Their "goodness" is above and beyond the qualities; it is as far superior to the condition of Sattva as the spiritual faculty Nous is superior to human reason or prudence, or as certainty is superior to faith, or knowledge to opinion. It cannot degenerate, but is eternally safe in the unchangeableness of the Good with which it is united. But human goodness which is not yet wholly religious or real may decline: must, indeed, decline some day, unless the faith or doxa on which it rests is changed into the knowledge which cannot be shaken.

This return to the consideration of virtue or goodness as we ordinarily understand it is marked by the reintroduction of the political analogy. Just as in the earlier books the full picture of righteousness was drawn for us first in the State and then in the individual soul, so now the account of the dangers which may bring ruin to the soul is given in a double form: first the decline of the good State is described—for the sake of clearness, we are told—and then the decline of the good man. But it is still the man, and not the State, that is of real importance; and it is the constitution of the man's soul, not the constitution of the State, which really explains the degeneration in each case.

[1] In other words, the Aristocratic State and man, whose degeneration is now to be described, is simply the *Good* State and man, as distinguished from the *Ideal* State and man. This distinction has already been explained in the last chapter. It is further discussed in a note at the end of this chapter.

The aristocracy of the good soul consists, as we learned in the fourth book, in the orderliness of the three essential elements, reason, passion and desire. This orderliness, dependent as it is upon continual restraint of the lower elements by the highest, requires incessant vigilance if it is to be maintained: once let the vigilance be relaxed for a moment, and disorder will creep in. This is the clue to the possible degeneration of the aristocratic State. In it, too, goodness consists in orderliness, that is, in the right relation of the three classes to each other, and the right performance of its due function by each of them. Decline from goodness begins, as the old Hindu philosophy puts it, whenever there is any confusion or mixture of the qualities and of the castes corresponding to them. In other words, the good State will preserve its goodness just so long as the classes are preserved pure and true to type; or (for this is the important thing) just so long as the golden class of guardians is really golden and is really supreme. Now the existence of everything human, even of the most perfect human excellence, is dependent upon some cycle of birth and death, of growth and decay. There is some such cycle for the good State, and it is connected with the (Karmic) law[1] by which human births are determined. So long as the cycle endures, the births in the State will be propitious: into each class will be born souls of the right quality, golden to golden, silver to silver, iron or copper to iron or copper. But at the end of the cycle the danger point will arrive. The Guardians who determine all the matings and therefore all the births in the State will not know this cycle (remember, they are not Philosopher-Kings, endowed with royal wisdom), and so they will not be able to take the necessary precautions. "All their knowledge and education will not attain to the understanding of human fecundity and sterility: the laws which regulate these will not be discovered by the intelligence which is alloyed with sense." Consequently the end of the cycle will bring a change for the worse. Slightly inferior souls will be born into the golden class, and degeneration will follow. For, when the children possessing these inferior souls grow up, and take their places as Guardians, they fail to do their duty perfectly. Education and culture are a little neglected; and the castes begin to be slightly confused.

[1] Plato expresses this law by a very elaborate mathematical calculation, upon which I comment later.

The pure gold of reasonableness becomes mixed with the baser metal of ambition : the harmony of Sattva is disturbed by the restlessness of Rajas ; and so the Aristocratic State passes into its first degenerate form—Timocracy, or a constitution based upon worship of honour. Power and profit become the dominant aim of its rulers, though the love of gain is still regarded as a thing to be ashamed of. But it is cherished in secret ; and the other characteristic of the Rajasic element—love of power, or ambition—is openly paraded as the mark of the ruler.[1]

The first degeneration of the aristocratic man is very similar. Owing to the defect in the mating of his parents, he inherits from his mother too much of the Rajasic element ; and, as the State in which he lives is no longer a perfect one, this lower element in his soul, already rather too strong, is fostered by the bad example of the citizens. Many of these, including his mother, despise his righteous father just because he is neither ambitious nor quarrelsome—an unenterprising simpleton, as they call him ; and so the father's good influence is diminished, and the son grows up a Timocratic man, " with a passion for distinction and command," and " with a touch of the money-lover."

The second step in the downward descent follows naturally from the first. The quality of Rajas, having once raised its head, proceeds to manifest itself, not only as ambition or passion for power, but in its more sordid aspect of a passion for gain. This, in the State, means the conversion of Timocracy into Oligarchy. " Wealth and the wealthy rise in honour, and, as a consequence, virtue and the virtuous sink in estimation." Property qualification becomes the recognised title to power. And at once the State loses its unity, and becomes two, not one—a State of the rich side by side with a State of the poor. And of the latter, some become paupers, and cease to perform any useful function ;

[1] I think the reader will see here how necessary it is to keep the Sanskrit terms for the three qualities. Plato's terms for them, and our translation of these, quite fail to convey the requisite double meaning, especially in the case of Rajas (Thumos, or the passionate element). This quality has, according to the Hindu doctrine, two different objects or aims : Power and Profit. It therefore includes both the quality of ambition or passion for power, and the quality of love of gain, or passion for profit. And these two aspects of its meaning respectively furnish the essential characteristics of Timocracy and Oligarchy, as explained by Plato. The fact that the latter uses this double meaning as the very basis of his account of the degeneration of the State is strong evidence that he is thinking of the Vedic " qualities " ; for, as far as I can discover, the Greek word " thumos " can no more bear the second half of the meaning of Rajas (namely, passion for gain), than can our translation of it—anger or passion or the spirited element.

while many of the former are drones in a worse sense still. For, as wealthy people, they do but consume the resources of the community, and are a veritable plague to their State—worse than drones, indeed, for God has made all the winged drones stingless, but to some of the two-legged drones he has given formidable stings—nothing less than the power to rob their fellow-citizens, and to commit every kind of crime.

The Oligarchical man is like the Oligarchical State. The lower side of the Rajasic element is dominant in his soul. He learns by experience that ambition is a treacherous master : power and fame are far more easily lost than won. But love of gain promises more solid and abiding satisfaction, provided it is accompanied by careful avoidance of extravagance. So he becomes a money-hunter, greedy to get wealth but not eager to spend it ; a sordid, hard-working, parsimonious creature, just the kind of man the world commends. His appetites are still kept in subjection, but by a low form of prudence, not by principle. And thus his soul is really divided against itself, and the starved and suppressed Tamasic element is always watching for an opportunity to escape from the control of the Rajasic passion for gain.

The third step in the descent carries us down to Democracy. Here again there is a natural transition from the preceding stage. The exaltation of wealth which marks an Oligarchy cannot long persist without giving rise to an exaltation of desire for the satisfactions which wealth can buy. Parsimony seldom lasts more than one generation ; and the extravagance of the young is actually encouraged by the most miserly money-makers, because it gives them an opportunity to increase their wealth. So you get capitalists and spendthrifts side by side—and the poor learn to despise them both ; until eventually, when opportunity comes, they rise and overmaster their rich rulers, and establish Democracy upon a basis of so-called equality and liberty. A beautiful constitution, this, is it not ? For, as everyone does what he likes, the most fascinating variety appears ; and the State becomes that most attractive thing, an agreeable, lawless, particoloured community.

Now let us turn to the degeneration of the individual soul which corresponds to the decline of the State from Oligarchy to Democracy. This always involves a transition from the domin-

ance of the Rajasic element, which, in a higher or lower form, is the predominant quality in Timocracy and Oligarchy, to that of the Tamasic element, which, in a higher or lower form again, we shall find to be the predominant quality in Democracy and Tyranny. This Tamasic element includes all those ignorant desires which we commonly call appetites ; and we must here distinguish between two kinds of appetites—the necessary and the unnecessary. Some appetities must always be allowed to function, because the satisfactions which they seek are either necessary to life or are advantageous to health of body and mind. But others ought always to be suppressed, because *their* satisfactions are either unnecessary or positively pernicious. Now in the Oligarchical man these latter *are* suppressed, for their satisfaction conflicts with his Rajasic passion for gain. But when the soul sinks from internal Oligarchy to Democracy, the thoroughly bad Tamasic element of unnecessary appetites begins to gain the upper hand. These, in increasing numbers, assault and seize the citadel of the man's heart, empty as it is of sound knowledge and true culture. Temperance and moderation, the sole virtues which, from prudential motives, the Oligarchical man possessed, are now branded as cowardice, and expelled with ignominy ; and Insolence, Disorder, Licentiousness and Shamelessness are enthroned in their stead, under the titles of Good Breeding, Freedom, Magnificence and Bravery. The distinction between necessary and unnecessary appetites and pleasures is henceforth obliterated ; and the Democratic soul lives from day to day in the gratification of every casual appetite in turn, under the proud motto of Liberty and Equality —a sort of multitudinous life, answering to the charming variety which marks the Democratic State.

We come now to the final degeneration of State and man. Just as Oligarchy is ruined by the excess of its predominant quality, intense passion for wealth leading naturally to desire for every kind of satisfaction, so Democracy is ruined by the excess of its peculiar attributes. For Liberty and Equality are anything but stable : each is dangerously near its opposite : Liberty worshipped for its own sake turns inevitably to licence, which is but a name for the very worst slavery ; and equality over-exalted turns as naturally into extreme inequality. Now in a Democracy liberty and equality are carried to such extreme

lengths as to invade every social relation. Even slaves are made free, and the sexes are proclaimed equal. Excess brings reaction, and the reaction to the slavery of Despotism comes about in this way: In the course of the State's degeneration from Timocracy to Oligarchy, and from Oligarchy to Democracy, we have seen how the class of drones comes into existence side by side with a class of rich money-lovers; and, by the time Democracy is reached, a third class has become of real political importance, I mean that of the humble hand-workers and labourers. Of these three, the rich have at any rate the merit of a kind of orderliness, else they could not amass wealth; but the other two classes are naturally disorderly, and between them manage to despoil the rich for their own advantage. The latter organise every sort of protection, defence and retaliation, with the result that the common people in their turn organise their forces, and choose a leader to be their champion. This is the final step. In electing a leader and exalting him, they have created a tyrant to rule over them; the champion of their rights quickly becomes the despot of their lives, holding sway by every kind of villainy in the approved manner of despots, flouting the Commons who raised him to power, like a parricide who kills the parents who have nurtured him. And that is the genesis of Tyranny in the State.

But what of the tyrannical man? Well, it is easy enough to understand how the democratic soul may pass into the condition of tyranny. If a man has taken variety of satisfactions for his good: if he has fallen a victim to the delusion of Liberty and Equality to such an extent as to welcome equally all pleasurable experiences simply because they are pleasurable: then the inherent instability of his condition will very soon lead to his falling under the dominance of some one master-lust, to which all his normal appetites will be the servitors. Whether he wishes it or not, some desire will grow in him until it has become a kind of monster stinging-drone in the hive of his desires, a ruinous, destroying tyrant, continually growing within his soul. And to understand how terrible is this soul-tyranny, you must remember that it is no ordinary desire that will make the man its slave. We know that there are within us possibilities of malignant desire so evil that we would never harbour them consciously. But they sometimes make themselves known in our dreams;

for it is in the condition of sleep that the uncontrolled and disorderly soul may sink to the deepest depths, just as the well-ordered and controlled soul may then rise to heights seldom reached in its waking moments. Well, that is the sort of desire which gains the mastery in the tyrannical soul, a desire uncurbed by any sense of decency or restraint, seeking satisfactions which are equally indecent and unrestrained.

Surely, you say, the tyrant soul has reached the lowest abyss of misery! No, my friend, not yet. There is an even lower depth; and this is reached only when such a soul is compelled by some unhappy accident to be tyrant, not over itself alone, but over others too. For then only will it feel the added pangs of fear, suspicion, jealousy and eternal isolation.

But now let us prove, in two different ways, that we are right in our assertion that each successive degeneration of the soul from its aristocratic state implies a necessary falling away from true happiness.

First, of the three elements of the soul, the reasonable, the passionate and the desiring, each aims at an object of its own. The Logistikon, or reason, loves knowledge and truth; Thumos, or passion, loves strife and honour; Epithumia, or desire, loves gain. And as the elements, so the men and women in whom they severally predominate. You may classify all human beings into these three classes: the reasonable people, who love truth; the ambitious people, who love honours; and the desiring people, who love gain. Now if you ask all these people which object gives the greatest satisfaction, each class will reply differently, each extolling the object of its particular choice. But it is clear that only the reasonable man is a sound judge, for he alone has passed through all three stages in his growth, and so has experience of each; and further, the faculty upon which sound judgment depends, namely, reason, has been specially cultivated by him, and not by the others.

Again, all satisfactions and dissatisfactions resemble a kind of above and below, a fulness and an emptiness. But there are three, not two, grades involved in Above and Below, the third grade being the level, intermediate between the two. By comparison with the Below, this level may be regarded as Above; but by comparison with the Above, it must be regarded as

Below. It is both—or neither: a sort of negative, half-way stage. Now all satisfactions, in the ordinary sense of satisfactions of desire, really amount to nothing more than a process of filling up an empty hole; that is, a process of rising from below to the level. (The desiring man sometimes thinks he does more than this: he thinks he has really reached an Above; but it is never so. Desire is a kind of void, and all pleasure or satisfaction of desire is simply a temporary filling up of the void, which seems entirely satisfactory—until the emptiness is felt again.) This holds true, not only of the desiring man's desire for gain, but also of the ambitious man's desire for honour. But the case of the reasonable man's love of knowledge and truth is quite different. *His* satisfaction is much more than filling up a void or rising to the level. Whenever he finds truth, he really does reach the Above, which the others never do. And, therefore, his satisfaction is permanent and real, while theirs is not; and the object in which he finds his satisfaction is real and enduring, while the objects of ambition and of desire are unreal and transitory.

You see now what a gulf separates the really tyrannical soul from the aristocratic or kingly soul. The former is thrice removed from even the oligarchical soul, which in turn is thrice removed from the aristocratic. So, even in the surface view, the tyrant is nine times removed from the kingly soul; while, if we look deeper, and consider the solid reality of his wretchedness, we must cube our number, and say that he is 729 times lower than the king in the measure of satisfaction or happiness.

And now, Glaucon, our task is really finished, our long quest at an end. We have answered the great question—What *are* Righteousness and Unrighteousness in their own nature, and as they affect the soul of man, apart from all external consequences? And we may put the answer in this way: our soul is a strange compound of man and lion and many-headed monster, living and growing side by side. He who says that it is profitable to be unjust is saying in effect that it is good to feed and strengthen the lion and the monster in us, and to starve the man; for *that* is what unrighteousness means. While by righteousness is meant the conquest of the man over both monster and lion, so that both may be tamed and used in his service. And actions and

habits are good or evil just in proportion as they either bring the brutish parts of our nature into subjection to the human (or should I say the divine ?) part, or make the human part the slave of the wild. And all the recognised virtues and vices are rightly sought or shunned for the same reason.

Further, to do evil and escape detection and punishment is *not* a clever but a disastrous thing ; for every escape encourages the beast within us, and so makes the soul more vicious, while right punishment tames the brute, and sets the man free. The man of understanding will avoid unrighteousness, not for fear of punishment, but simply because it is ruinous to his soul ; and he will follow every good practice, not that men may think well of him, but simply because only so can his soul find the harmony which is happiness. Wealth and honours and all other satisfactions he will seek only just so far as they will help to make him a better man ; and in all his conduct of life he will guide his steps by reference to that pattern of goodness on which we modelled our Righteous State. You say now that you do not believe this perfect State can ever be realised ? Well, the question of its present or future existence here on earth is of no importance. It exists, perhaps, only as a pattern laid up in heaven for the guidance of the individual soul—a " perfect constitution " which he who wills may see, and, seeing, follow, in all the ordering of his life. . . .

The two books briefly summarised above call for little in the way of commentary. They lead us back to the familiar conceptions of common sense and our common interests, and so round off the discussion of righteousness on the everyday level on which it was begun. But one or two special points need to be emphasised. I have already explained that the " aristocratic " soul and its goodness, which are taken as the pinnacle from which degeneration begins, are to be carefully distinguished from the Royal soul and its Righteousness, which represent, of course, the true summit of possible goodness. The aristocratic soul corresponds to the good Guardian who was delineated in the fourth book—as good as a man can be before he has attained God-knowledge. He is the incarnation of Sattva ; and his characteristic is steadfastness rooted in faith. He is called in the Sanskrit " didhi " : that is, soothfast or steadfast, because

he has made perfect by faith the highest *human* faculty of intuition of right, and faithfully accepts its dictates. This faculty is, of course, very different from the really divine faculty—Nous or Atman or the Spirit which is one with God. But it is very far superior to mind or the reasoning faculty. The latter is called in Sanskrit Manas ; the higher faculty is called Buddhi, and is the faculty of decision or will. When the Buddhic consciousness is really good it corresponds fairly closely to what some philosophers have called the Good Will, for this term implies the necessary combination of right knowledge and intuitively right choice, of intelligence and moral excellence, which are associated with Buddhi at its best. And the Buddhic or aristocratic man resembles very exactly the " justum et tenacem propositi virum " (the just man of firm-set purpose) whom no adversity can shake. He is very near to God, as the Hindu scriptures say ; but he is *not* immovable, because, unlike the Muni or the true Philosopher-King, he has not the full illumination which makes a man for ever a citizen of the City of God, and removes him from the earthly wheel of change and decay.

Similarly, the aristocratic State, which, in Book IV and again in Books VIII and IX, is treated as entirely good (" although it appears that you had a still more excellent account to give of it "), is the humanly best or Sattvic State ; but it is not the ideal. At the end of Book IV this good or humanly perfect State has one final and all-important condition attached to it : " God must preserve for the citizens the laws which have been given to them," or " There must be some authority within the State to keep its constitution inviolate." In other words, the " good " State, like the good man, is " didhi "—kept secure by faith, steadfast so long as faith holds unquestioned sway. But this condition falls far short of the condition of the Ideal State, in which the Philosophy of the King is itself the all-sufficient security for all time, even as in the Ideal soul, knowledge, supplanting faith or prudence, makes righteousness eternal by its own power.

This distinction is really vital : to disregard it is to miss the whole meaning of the *Republic*. But most readers—and, I think, most commentators—fail to recognise the distinction. Misled by the subtlety of Plato's method of presenting the truth, they

imagine that the Aristocratic State is the same as the Ideal State, and the Aristocratic man the same as the Philosopher-King; whereas they are in both cases totally and radically different. I must, at this point, make this assertion dogmatically. For the benefit of commentators, I have added an argumentative note at the close of this chapter; for the benefit of ordinary readers, I will add here one or two considerations which may help to make the matter clear. The essential characteristics of the ideal condition, for both the individual soul and for society, are elsewhere described by Plato as being two, namely, Immortality and Unity. In the central books of the *Republic* the necessary unity is secured for the State by absolute fidelity to the principle of "having all things in common," including husbands and wives and children. There is to be no family life: no child has a particular father or mother, no citizen has a particular wife or husband or child. The necessary immortality is secured, of course, by the realisation of the eternal spirit or Nous as the sole guide and ruler. The Philosopher-King, by "bringing into existence Nous and Truth," saves both his own soul and his own State. But in the Aristocratic State both these essential characteristics are absent. The guarantee of immortality is lacking: its rulers are just good guardians, possessing prudence, but not wisdom, dependent for their understanding of the principles of government upon "intelligence alloyed with sense," and therefore "unable to attain to the knowledge of the laws of human life and decay." That is why the State they rule is *not* immortal, but must eventually degenerate. The cause of unity is lacking also. Full community has not been attained: the aristocratic man, we find, is just the head of an ordinary particularist family, whose particular wife and son criticise him because he is too Sattvic and not Rajasic or "pushing" enough to please them. To these two defects the degeneration of the Aristocratic State is due.

The reader will have no difficulty in keeping this distinction clear if he bears in mind the peculiar structure of the whole book, remembering that it deals with two very distinct levels of life and reality and knowledge—a lower or human, and a higher or superhuman. The first four books and the eighth and ninth are concerned with the lower level; the fifth, sixth and seventh with the higher only. On the lower level we reach a "summit

of goodness " which seems to be perfect—until the higher level shows its defects. On the lower level we reach the " good and true " condition of man and State—aristocracy, or the rule of the best—only to find it transcended by a " better best " when the higher level is entered. This, of course, is all in harmony with the paradox of Sattva, which is so familiar in the old Indian philosophy, but so unfamiliar to us. You reach the summit of Sattva, or goodness, in everything—virtue, knowledge, beauty, life, happiness—only to discover that you are on the top of a mole-hill, and that the real Himalayan peaks are above the clouds. So it is with Plato. He discourses, in the lower-level books, on goodness or perfection for man and State, just as though there were no upper world beyond the clouds of sense-perception and the changing phenomena of life. And if the central books of the *Republic* had never been written, we should never have guessed the existence of the real perfection or of the true ideal. At the end of the fourth book he pretends that he has finished his quest, and has found the highest form of righteous man and righteous State. So we should all have thought, unless the three following books had shown " that he had an even better account to give of both State and man." He even says that the highest condition (on the lower level) may be called either aristocracy (that is, government by the best) or monarchy. " It does not matter which term is used." But it *does* matter enormously, as the three succeeding books plainly show ; for real monarchy (government by the King or the spiritual power which is far above the human best) is on a different plane altogether, and belongs to another world, the really ideal world. Similarly, the account of the degeneration of the " good and true State " in Books VIII and IX is begun and carried through as though this really ideal condition had never been mentioned. He speaks of there being five possible conditions in regard to the constitutions of States and the dispositions of men, of which Aristocracy is the highest and Tyranny the lowest. This is true—on the lower or human level. But there is a sixth condition, the highest of all, which Books VI and VII have described—the condition of " Immortality and Unity " which the individual soul at least may reach, though not the human State. The account of this highest condition, however, is now finished and done with ; and the discussion proceeds almost as if it had never

been inserted. There is just one final reference to the really ideal State—at the very end of the ninth book ; and that reference is a definite reminder that we must not regard it as on the same plane as the five States described in Books VIII and IX, but must think of it as " a pattern laid up in heaven."[1]

The relatively perfect or Sattvic condition of both the human State and the human soul is represented by Plato as being subject to an inevitable law of change and decay. It *must* degenerate some day through its own inherent instability. This does not mean that any good condition of the soul must be merely transitory : that we climb only to fall again. That would be pessimism indeed ! The sole meaning is that there is a danger of falling so long as the highest point is not reached, or so long as real knowledge of the Real Good is not yet attained. No soul need fall back at any point in its ascent ; but it cannot stand still : the danger of a fall is always present, and the only escape from the danger is continual progress upwards until the final goal is found. But the very best human society is bound to fall repeatedly : its progress can never reach to the absolute Good : its constitution can never escape from the " Qualities " or the combination of different classes of individuals representing unequal levels of moral development : it carries the causes of instability within its very being : it is permanently bound to the wheel of change.

The causes of degeneration, whether for the good State or for the good soul, appear, from Plato's account, to be of two quite different kinds. There are, first, the obvious internal defects of imperfect knowledge and the presence of Rajasic or Tamasic tendencies. The governing element is prudence or intelligence, which rules by keeping the two lower elements in subjection. It has not yet been transmuted into the wisdom which alone

[1] It will thus be seen that for Plato, as for Aristotle, there were six possible conditions for the inidvidual soul in respect to goodness and badness. The highest is, for both, " something divine " (as Aristotle also calls it) ; the lowest is " something beastlike." But it is characteristic of the whole difference between the two philosophers that, whereas Aristotle dismisses the highest form of goodness with a single phrase, and devotes all his attention to the intermediate (or humanly intelligible) forms, Plato's deepest interest is centred in that highest form, the " something divine," and is only given in a secondary degree to the lower forms. Or—to put the difference in another way—Aristotle regards the condition of absolute perfection as something which can be imagined indeed but cannot possibly be made real ; while Plato regards it as the only reality, all the lower forms being but quasi-real. It would be difficult to find a better example of the difference between the intellectualist and the true mystic.

is capable of changing the very nature of the lower elements. And so long as Rajas and Tamas exist in a form capable of Rajasic and Tamasic activity, so long is the equilibrium, secured by the authority of prudence, liable to disturbance. In the second place, there is an apparently very different cause which operates in the case of every existing thing possessing a mortal nature. This is represented as a cyclical law of decay, and appears to be external to and independent of the character or disposition of any individual soul or society. It resembles a cosmic force, which no virtue or prudence can resist. But this is not the true account of it. It *is* a universal cosmic law: but it is no more something external to the individual's character than is fate or destiny—which it very closely resembles. For it is only one aspect of the great law of Karma, by which every being in every kingdom of existence (short of the purely spiritual) is forced to return from a higher to a lower level of life and experience, *if* there is in it any live germ of impulse towards the satisfactions and activities of that lower level. Put plainly in moral terms, the law means that, if in any soul there still remains any hankering after honours or any desire for the satisfactions which make up our human notion of happiness, that soul must inevitably come back to a life in which ambition or pursuit of happiness will be a ruling motive.

Two things, however, are obvious. This cosmic law of Karma is *not* something external to the individual choice and character. In so far as the soul possesses the power not only to subjugate but actually to transform its desires—to change the heart, in fact—it possesses also the power to make its own Karma, and eventually to rise above Karma altogether. And, further, the law is seen to be simply another aspect of the fact of the existence of the three Qualities. It is, indeed, the law of the activity of Rajas and Tamas in relation to Sattva; or—in regard to moral life—the law of desire in relation to equanimity. It is the law of destiny, indeed; but the destiny is our own creation, the result of our own conscious actions and our own conscious desires.

Now Plato introduces all these connected causes clearly enough in his account of the degeneration of the aristocratic State and man. The defective knowledge of the Guardians is there as the deepest cause, the explanation of the very possibility

of change according to Karmic law. The tendency to Rajasic activity is there also—the explanation of the Timocratic form immediately assumed by State and man when the first change takes place. And the Karmic law is introduced as the instrumental cause of change, not in its general form, but in the form in which it operates most strikingly, namely, as the law of human births, or of the return of souls to human existence.[1] Plato expresses this Karmic law, in so far as it affects the continued re-peopling of his good State, as a kind of cyclical law, or necessary revolution of the wheel of change at the end of some definite cycle. And he indicates the length of the cycle by a very elaborate and wholly incomprehensible mathematical calculation. Concerning the latter, only two comments are necessary. First, it is fairly certain that we have lost the clue to its meaning, and are not likely to discover it now by any exercise of ingenuity. Secondly, it is not in the least important that we should understand it : even if such a cycle exists, and if its length can be known, the knowledge of it would not in the very slightest degree assist our moral or spiritual progress. At the same time, I am very far from suggesting that Plato introduces the calculation as a sort of elaborate satire on the occult use of numbers. He is perfectly serious ; he believes in the existence of the cycle and in the possibility of knowing its duration. He was profoundly impressed by the mystical use of numbers of which Pythagoras appears to have made so much use ; he adopted the Pythagorean interpretation of the meaning of numbers as the basis of the first of his " higher sciences " ; he evidently adopted it also as an aid in the interpretation of the highest truth.[2] And it is clear from his own references to Pythagoras that he had far too much reverence for the latter's teaching to treat any part of it as a joke. It is safe to assume, therefore, that in this passage, and perhaps also in the simpler passage in Book IX concerning the distance which separates the tyrant from the good man, Plato is expressing a serious meaning which we cannot now understand. We may note, moreover, that this

[1] The law of reincarnation is also the most popular form of the cosmic law of Karma, and it is, of course, the same as the law of *births* which Plato refers to. For, according to the Eastern doctrine of reincarnation which he fully accepts, all human births are *re*-births of souls into particular human bodies with particular stations in society. The birth of *wrong* souls into the three great classes of the State is the mode by which its decline takes place.

[2] See the account of his public lecture on the Good, given elsewhere.

very same occult use of numbers is characteristic, not only of Pythagoras, but of the Indian philosophy from which both Pythagoras and Plato derived so much. It is not a part of the Vedanta teaching, which is wholly free from anything approaching occultism; but it is a conspicuous element in the general doctrines of Hinduism. There you will find the same elaborate calculations of cycles, which define the term of existence for all sorts of created things. There is an exact cycle expressing the duration of the phenomenal universe (any Brahman will tell you how many millions and thousands of years make up each Kalpa of creation, as it is called); there are also cycles for the growth of each body, for the development of each soul, for the length of time spent in each heaven or hell, and so on. I do not know or care enough about the subject to say whether or not the occult numbers of Hinduism might throw any light on the cycle of Plato's good State. It is quite possible that they would.

The much simpler calculation by which, in Book IX, Plato shows that the aristocratic soul is 729 times happier than the tyrannical soul, does not call for much comment. Its application, if not its whole meaning, is plain enough. The good or aristocratic soul is wholly happy: we may represent his happiness by the integer 1. The oligarchical soul, third in the downward scale, can have but $\frac{1}{3}$ of this amount of happiness; and the tyrannical soul, third in the downward descent from the oligarch, can have but $\frac{1}{3}$ of the oligarch's happiness—that is, $\frac{1}{9}$ of the aristocrat's. But this is making the calculation on the assumption that happiness may be represented by lines on a plane surface, whereas, of course, it is a very solid thing, and can only be fairly represented by a solid figure. Consequently, to get a true representation of the facts, we must cube our numbers: 1, $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{9}$ thus become 1, $\frac{1}{27}$, $\frac{1}{729}$; and *this* is the true measure of the proportion of happiness which the different souls enjoy. And, since the number 729 corresponds almost exactly with the number of days and nights in every year, we are entitled to say that the good soul enjoys as much happiness in a single day or night as the tyrant enjoys in a whole year.

It is not likely that Plato attached any very serious importance to this ingenious calculation. It is just a graphic and popular mode of enforcing his point. The whole of the second half of Book IX is, as I have said, on a popular level. Its arguments

concerning the relative advantages and disadvantages of righteousness and unrighteousness are intended to appeal to readers who do not appreciate the deeper teaching of the central books. They are unnecessary and beside the point so far as the Real Philosopher is concerned. *His* condition is absolute and infinite : no comparison with any ordinary human condition is possible. But on the human or lower level the degrees of happiness or misery according to the accompanying degrees of righteousness or unrighteousness are worth explaining : the arguments given to press home the point are both serious and valuable—on the popular level.

This fact of the popular character of the books we are now considering is the clue to the contradictions which they contain. Of these there are several. The greatest of all is the one which I have already discussed enough—I mean, the apparent confusion between the good man and the true Philosopher, or between the highest relative goodness and the real or absolute goodness, which runs all through the simpler books. This deliberate fusion of the two " ideals " is very marked at the end of Book IX, where the human and the divine, the man and the God in man, are spoken of as if they were the same, and where the terms Aristocratic and Royal are deliberately " reckoned as one." It is to be noted, also, that Plato allows himself to carry this contradiction into details. We have been told in the central books that equality of the sexes is one of the essential characteristics of the really ideal State. In the eighth book this very characteristic is treated as something positively dreadful, a sign of real degradation. Equality of the sexes, like equality and liberty applied to slaves and animals, is one of the vicious marks of democracy !

An even more glaring contradiction occurs in the psychology upon which the arguments rest. In the eighth book we have the exact and right explanation of the two lower of the three Qualities, according to Indian philosophy. Thumos or Rajas, the restless element, carries the double meaning of love of honour, or ambition, and love of gain, or devotion to profit-making ; while Epithumia, or Tamas, the desiring element, connotes the appetites or desires for all kinds of sensual enjoyments. These meanings are essential to the whole argument ; only thus is it possible to explain, by reference to the uprising force of Rajas,

the emergence of the two leading types of the pushing man of affairs, who is very much a man of the world, worldly (whether honour or gain is his object), but not at all a slave of the flesh, as are all the representatives of Tamas, the followers of sense-pleasure; while the Tamasic element alone is the explanation of the two lowest types, the democrat and the tyrant, who are entirely at the mercy of the lusts of the flesh. This, as I have said, is the correct psychology, according to the Vedanta system, in which Rajas is definitely connected with the double object—power and profit—while Tamas is equally definitely confined to sense-pleasure. But in Book IX Plato entirely contradicts this, and returns to the ordinary meanings of the Greek terms, limiting Thumos (the element of high spirit) to love of power, and making love of gain the leading characteristic of Epithumia (desire in the ordinary sense). By so doing, he simply obliterates the whole distinction upon which the account of the degeneration of soul and State depends.

Now this contradiction is not only easy to explain, but is exactly what we should expect to find. For us, as for a Greek, it is a real strain to make our psychological terms correspond to the Sanskrit connotations. "Anger" (the passionate or high-spirited element) does *not* naturally connote desire for anything, though it is possible to make it include love of honour or dignity; while "desire" covers the whole range of conscious aiming at satisfactions, including desire for money. We may, by an effort, keep the terms in correspondence with the Indian meanings, so long as we are working out an argument on Indian lines. But as soon as we come back to our ordinary discussions, we are quite sure to fall back into the meanings appropriate in our own psychology. This is exactly what Plato does: and the fact is the very strongest proof of the influence of Indian thought upon his philosophy. So long as he is working out his argument along the lines of Indian philosophy—as he does not only in the central books but also in a great part of the simpler books—he manages to keep his terms in fairly close harmony with the Indian meanings. But when he returns to popular arguments on ordinary lines, he reverts to the accepted Greek psychology, using its terms in their natural connotations. And it will be observed that *all* the arguments relating to the connection between Righteousness and its rewards (or happiness as we understand

it) are on a popular level, and are not in any way connected with Indian thought or Vedanta philosophy. Hence the contradictions which those arguments contain.

There is one of the popular arguments in the ninth book which calls for a short comment. Plato bases part of his plea for the reality of the good man's happiness upon an assumed difference in kind between the objects of our desires. This raises, in a rather crude form, the question dear to moral philosophers, whether pleasures can be said to differ in kind. To many such philosophers, especially the Utilitarians, this question is of real importance ; but not to Plato. He would admit, of course, that a love of amusements is better than a passion for drink, even as the Democratic man is better than the Tyrant ; or that a passion for distinction is better than a passion for financial success, even as Timocracy is better than Oligarchy. But none of these differences is vital. Pleasures, in the sense of satisfactions of the aims of the self, do not really differ in kind, though perhaps we may speak of different species related to the psychical condition indicated by the desire, and to the grade of development reached—as well as to the social consequences involved. But the only genuine difference between objects of pursuit is that which distinguishes, for example, the love of truth from the love of honours or of gain, or from any other attachment in which the self is the centre. And the distinction is this : in the one case the aim is as nearly as possible disinterested ; in all other cases, the self-satisfaction is the obvious motive.

It is very noticeable that, in summing up the relative values of the objects pursued by each of the three Qualities, and of the happiness derived from the pursuit, Plato does not take into account at all their social reactions. It has been maintained (e.g. by Mr. Temple in his *Plato and Christianity*) that the " governing principle " which determined Plato's analysis of the soul was a social principle, consisting of the simple fact that " there are three primary relations in which a man may stand to other men, and there are only three. He may ignore them, he may compete with them, and he may co-operate with them." Consequently the really important fact concerning the three qualities or faculties of the soul is their relation to the socially important process of co-operation. The Logistikon, the highest,

is altogether good because it involves complete co-operation with others ; Epithumia, the lowest, is bad, because it is quite self-centred ; Thumos, the middle faculty, is partly good and partly bad because it is always competitive—and competition is a kind of distorted co-operation. I have already dealt with this attempt to force into Plato's teaching a meaning which is primarily social. I would only point out here that, if this is his meaning, he very successfully misses the opportunity of saying so. All through his summing up of the gains which accrue from the dominance of the Logistikon (or Sattva) and the disadvantages resulting from the dominance of either of the other qualities, he has no word to say about the social benefits or drawbacks involved. He simply does not think of them at all : his whole interest is individualistic, centred in the individual soul and its happiness or misery. Is it not clear once more that it is the relation to the soul's life and progress, not the relation to social well-being, which furnishes the principle determining his psychological distinctions ?

There is, however, one passage in the ninth book which shows very clearly how and to what extent the social considerations must be taken into account—and shows also how completely they are subordinated to the theme of individual well-being. In discussing the essential wretchedness of the tyrannical condition of the soul, Plato expressly says that the tyrant cannot be said to have reached the lowest depth of misery until he is forced to tyrannise over others as well as suffer tyranny in his own soul. The significance of this remark lies in its bearing upon the return to active life of the Royal soul, insisted upon in Book VII. These two, the Philosopher-King and the Tyrant, are at the extreme ends of the scale of Righteousness and Unrighteousness, of happiness and unhappiness. Each is therefore a perfect representative of the extreme to which he belongs. The King is wholly attuned to a single principle, his divine faculty of Nous ; the tyrant is wholly enslaved to a single element, a ravening, bestial lust. The King is utterly at peace within, for his soul is in harmony with the unchanging reality of the Good ; the tyrant's soul is all discord, because, although it is in subjection to a single element, that element is itself the very acme of discordant jarring, namely, vice at its worst. We naturally expect, as Glaucon did, that we may further assume

each to represent, in himself, the extreme of happiness or misery. In fact, the whole argument has gone to show that these two representatives of Righteousness and Unrighteousness do really reach the extremes of happiness and unhappiness, in the condition of their own individual souls, apart from any relation to their social setting. This is the great contention of the book. And yet Plato insists that the limit is not quite reached for either until each is forced to function actively according to his nature in his society: the Philosopher-King must come back to earth to guide his people, the tyrant must exercise his tyranny over others, if the full significance of the qualities of each is to be seen. For each manifests himself most completely in action: each realises his full potentiality for good or for evil only "by doing his right work rightly." The Philosopher is most kingly only when he is saving his State; the tyrant is utterly a tyrant only when he is ruining his State by oppressing it.

The concluding sentences of the ninth book are yet more significant. Glaucon is driven to confess at last that he no longer believes in the possible realisation of the Ideal State; and Socrates replies that it does not matter whether or not it can become a reality on earth. It is only needed as a divine pattern for the guidance of individual souls in the management of their own lives. Thus the Ideal society, so long dangled before our earth-bound vision as a lure to lead us on in the quest for divine truth, is finally drawn up into the spiritual realm to which it has always belonged. This is, I think, a final confirmation of the interpretation I have put forward throughout of the real purpose of the "political analogy" and of the picture of the ideal community. In this work, at any rate, Plato's teaching is not intended to be applied politically or socially. We are taught the way of the good soul, not the way of the good State; the governance of the individual life is the dominant theme from beginning to end, not the management of any social community. The *Republic* contains no Utopia, but only a "heavenly model" of the perfect constitution, which the soul of man may copy, and so be saved. "In heaven there is laid up a pattern of it, methinks, which he who desires may behold, and beholding may set his own house in order. But whether such an one exists, or ever will in fact exist, is no matter; for he will live after the manner of that city, having nothing to do with any other."

*Note.—Concerning the distinction between the Ideal State and the Aristocratic State.*

The sharp distinction which I have assumed between the Ideal State and the Aristocratic State, and between the Philosopher-King and the Aristocratic man, has not, I believe, been recognised by commentators. I must therefore explain more fully the reasons which justify the distinction.

If any reader is familiar with the old Hindu philosophy, and also accepts my contention that Plato's deepest philosophy is very closely akin to it, then he will need no further arguments to convince him that the ideally righteous man or State cannot possibly be the one whose degeneration is described. No degeneration can befall that which is beyond the Qualities; for it no longer contains the seeds of instability, whether these take the form of defective knowledge or excess of restlessness or of the deeper ignorance which is vice. No decline is possible for the really "converted" soul; nor would it be possible for a really religious society—if such a thing could exist. This Plato definitely admits, by implication, at any rate, if not explicitly. His description of the Philosopher-King is quite patently the description of a soul which has united with the Good, never again to be separated from it. His account of the Philosophic State is less clear: but he has already, at the close of Book VII, shown us that it can never exist on earth except by a kind of miracle; and at the end of Book IX he settles the matter by making it a veritable ideal existing only in heaven, and in this way he puts it finally beyond the reach of change.

But it will be objected that, if Plato's real meaning requires this distinction between the perfect State and the aristocratic State, he would surely have made the distinction clear instead of obscuring it by the language he uses. Now I readily admit that Plato seems to mislead us by the opening words of Book VIII. The seventh book ends with the words "enough then of the perfect State, and of the man who bears his image. . . . Nothing remains to be said about them." The eighth book opens with the words, "And so we have arrived at the conclusion that in the perfect State wives and children are to be in common," and he goes on to recapitulate the conditions on which the Ideal State depends, namely, community of families, of property, and of pursuits, even bringing in the rule of Philosophy by the rather confusing phrase "the best philosophers and the bravest warriors are to be their kings." He then continues, "Now that this division of our task is concluded, let us find the point at which we digressed, so that we may return into the old path," so going back to the end of Book IV. This piecing together of the two different levels of the argument is certainly baffling; but (*a*) it is characteristic of Plato's entire treatment of his subject in the *Republic*; (*b*) it contains significant clues to the real meaning, which is made perfectly plain a little later.

(*a*) All through the *Republic*, Plato presents his deepest convictions

with a sort of assumed diffidence. He knew perfectly well what would have been the effect upon his Greek readers if he had said plainly, "So far I have been dealing with the facts of life—moral, social, and intellectual—as you know them. Now I am going to carry the discussion into another plane, that of the spiritual or religious or otherworldly." He therefore purposely refrains from separating too clearly the different levels of the argument: let all readers pass unconsciously from one to the other, reading both with equal interest; let all find the doctrines which appeal to them most; the distinction will be clear enough to those whose special interest lies in the spiritual plane. This is obviously the explanation of the delightful and astonishingly skilful transition made in Book V; I think the more abrupt transition at the beginning of Book VIII is to be explained in the same way. (*b*) For it is significant that we are brought back from the higher level to the lower, from the spiritual to the social, by a reference to the community of wives and children and pursuits—the very same vexed question which was used as the stepping-stone from the lower level to the higher in Book V. But in Book V this topic led us on to the really vital condition of perfection—the rule of philosophy—which is the theme of the central books and the real basis of the Ideal State. In the opening passage of Book VIII this vital condition is slurred over: "the best philosophers" and "the bravest warriors" are grouped together just as if they were on the same level; while the principle of "all things in common" is emphasised as the chief characteristic of the perfect State. This latter principle represented, in Plato's thought, the *social* expression of one of the two essential marks of the ideal, namely, absolute unity. The other essential mark, namely, immortality or unchangeableness, was of course dependent upon the supremacy of Spirit or Nous. Now in the fourth page of Book VIII he definitely rules out this supremacy of pure spirit from the "good" or aristocratic State. The latter is, he says, governed by Guardians who do *not* possess absolute knowledge, but only "intelligence alloyed with sense." And this inferior faculty in the rulers is the first cause of the State's decline. The other condition—absolute unity—he is unwilling to rule out of the realm of social possibility quite so explicitly. He had posited the existence of unity (as a general principle only) as a mark of the good State in Book IV. But the terribly difficult detailed requirements of the principle are only worked out in Book V—the transition to the higher level. In Book VIII there is no definite assertion that the aristocratic State does not comply with these requirements (as there is in the case of the other great condition, the rule of absolute wisdom); but it is clear from the description of the aristocratic man that the requirements were *not* complied with. Even among the very best of the Guardians family life is seen to be going on as usual: there is no community of husbands and wives and children. And, just as the absence of true wisdom is the first and most obvious cause of the aristocratic State's decline, so this absence of true unity is seen to be the secondary cause.

One feels, in reading other works of Plato's—especially some passages in the *Laws*—that he found it very hard to abandon his dream of a perfectly unified society, just as we feel, in reading the *Republic*, that he found it hard to abandon his dream of a society made perfect by wisdom. It is customary to say that, although he obviously abandoned the latter while writing the *Republic*, he did not give up his belief in the possibility of a society made ideal by the unity which should come from complete community until later : until, in fact, he wrote some of his later works, such as the *Laws*, in which this complete community is given up, and only a " second best " constitution is described as possible. But this is not the case. The possibility of the Ideal State in all its essentials is abandoned in the *Republic*, including the essential of community of wives and children ; or rather, as I prefer to believe, it is not abandoned, but its impossibility is a foregone conclusion from the very beginning. The semblance of a gradual and reluctant abandonment of it is part of the art with which the whole book is written. But whether this is so or not, it is certain, I think, that the aristocratic State whose decline is described in Book VIII is only a " second best," and not the Ideal, which, as we learn from the *Laws*, must rest on the basis of complete community of all things, and must possess both immortality and unity.

The assertion on p. 544E of the text that the constitutions of States are five in number, and the dispositions of individuals are also five, presents little difficulty, if, as is clear, Plato has placed the divine type of constitution on a pinnacle by itself, and is now dealing with constitutions of States and minds in their normal human form.

The distinction I have drawn between Aristocracy (the government by Sattva) and Monarchy (the rule of Royal Wisdom) may be objected to as involving a contradiction of Plato's words in Book IV (p. 445) where he says that the best (human) constitution may be called either aristocracy or monarchy, according as it is ruled by one eminent man or by several. But there is no real contradiction. The Sattvic condition is the best possible condition for human society, and you may therefore call it by either of the two political terms which you may take to represent the best condition—whether aristocracy or monarchy. The term monarchy has here, in effect, the same meaning as aristocracy, namely, government by Sattva, or the good element, whether regarded as residing in the good Guardian or in the whole Guardian class. But when we come to the Philosopher-King the case is entirely altered. *Then* we reach a condition of monarchy of a very different order—no longer government by Sattva, but government by the Royal Nous and its wisdom. I have thought it well to emphasise this distinction by separating sharply the condition of aristocracy from that of monarchy, giving to the latter term the higher meaning just explained.

It may be noted, further, that the distinction which I have drawn agrees in essentials with the divisions laid down in the *Politicus*.

Plato there distinguishes six possible constitutions—and one ideal one, which is on a plane by itself. The six possible constitutions correspond to the five described in the *Republic*, with only unimportant differences. In the *Politicus* (as in the *Republic*) Plato insists that the essence of a good constitution depends upon the existence of good Law, and of respect for the good Law, on the part of the Rulers. An autocracy (or rule by a single good Guardian) is best—*provided* he rules in accordance with the given good Law ; but the same form of constitution is also the worst of all—*if* the ruler does not respect the Law ; for then autocracy becomes tyranny. Aristocracy (or rule by a class of good Guardians) is the next best—granted the same condition of respect for the given Law. But, without this, the same form of constitution becomes oligarchy, which is bad. Democracy (or rule by all the citizens) is even allowed to be passably good—if, once more, the fixed and given Law is respected ; but it is, of course, bad (only less bad than tyranny) without this supreme condition. All through the account, it is not the *form* of Government which is the all-important matter, but the principle which animates the Governors. The Ideal Ruler (the Philosopher-King of the *Republic*) alone rules without Laws by the guidance of his own sure wisdom. But all ordinary human rulers must have Right Law given to them ; and if they rule in strict conformity with this, then their rule is good, whether the power is in the hands of a single man, of a class of men, or of the whole body of citizens.

An interesting illustration of the confusion which I am here combating may be found in the Rev. W. Temple's recently published *Plato and Christianity*, p. 96 : " In Plato's Ideal State there were three main classes—the philosopher-kings who governed in the light of eternal truth ; the warrior class obedient to the kings, and fighting either for the defence of the State or for the sake of civilisation against barbarism ; and the craftsmen who produced the necessities and comforts of life generally." I think this statement confuses the whole teaching of the *Republic*—the religious teaching, certainly, with which Mr. Temple is specially concerned. In the " good and true " State dealt with in the simpler or lower-level books, there were, of course, three classes—the good Guardians (*not* Philosopher-Kings), the warriors, and the craftsmen. But in the Ideal State, dealt with only in Books V, VI, and VII, this is not so. To it, and to it alone, the Philosopher-King belongs ; and there is really no other class in it. In the Royal individual soul the three Qualities are transcended and practically cease to exist : the perfected soul passes beyond the Qualities, and is for that very reason beyond the possibility of change or degeneration. It has no longer any ambitious element or pleasure-seeking element in it—no warrior or craftsman element to disturb it. And in the Royal State—*if* it could ever be realised—there would be but one class also ; for all, whatever their work, would be philosopher-kings either actually or in embryo. It too would be " beyond the Qualities," and their social reflections, the three castes or classes—at

any rate so far as these latter represent any differences of moral importance. And this, of course, is one of the reasons why the Ideal State can never exist on earth ; or rather, let us say, why the Ideal State can never exist as a State or Polis, any more than the ideal individual can exist as a politician.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE TENTH BOOK OF THE *REPUBLIC*. THE BANISHMENT OF ART AND POETRY; AND THE ACCOUNT OF THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL, AND THE LAW OF RE-INCARNATION.

WE have now reached the logical end of the *Republic*. But there is still another book—the tenth—which may be described as a very extraordinary addition to the rest of the work. It is divided into two parts, of which the second, consisting in an account of the immortality of the soul and of its life after death, is entirely relevant and adds force to the whole preceding argument. But the first part is the exact reverse ; it consists merely in a very laboured and very unconvincing attack on art and poetry, which probably seems to the reader to be as irrelevant as it is wrong-headed. I doubt whether anyone can read it without a feeling of exasperation—of surprise, certainly, that Plato should have marred the beauty of his masterpiece by such an unnecessary attack upon those who reveal to us the ideal in painting or sculpture or verse. But let the reader judge for himself. I will give as fair a summary as I can ; and then we will try to reach a more careful decision.

Socrates begins by saying that, while he is convinced of the excellence of the regulations laid down for the organisation of the ideal State, he feels this conviction most strongly in reference to the regulation which placed a ban upon all the imitative poets, from Homer to the great tragedians. For there is something utterly wrong about all imitation. To begin with, we know that there is one and only one real archetype or Form for every class of created phenomenal things, whether natural or made by hands. We human beings may talk about making or creating things, such as tables or bedsteads ; but in "making" these things we are really only copying the archetype made by the Great Artificer. Still, our imitations have a certain amount of reality

about them: they are at least first-hand copies of the eternal Forms which God has made for each existent class of things. But suppose someone were to take a mirror and so make a reflection of the table or bed we have made, we should say that he had only produced a copy or imitation of the thing which we, in the first instance, had produced as a copy of the eternal Form. In other words, he would have produced a copy of a copy.

Now that is just what the painter does. When he paints a picture of any created phenomenal thing, he is producing a copy of that which is itself a copy of the Real Thing—the eternal archetype; and his production is therefore thrice removed from reality and truth.[1] If he paints a picture of a bed, his production is as far removed from what we call a real bed, as this in turn is removed from *the* real bed which is the archetype of all beds. And, in painting it, he is much lower, in skill and knowledge, than the carpenter who makes a bedstead, and who, at any rate, knows enough about the archetype to copy it fully, in all its parts and purposes.

Apply this to poetry, and note the result. All the great tragic poets, including their master, Homer, draw for us pictures of all sorts of things, including virtues and great deeds. But that does not argue any knowledge on their part of virtue or of greatness or of anything else which they describe. They only know just enough about the partial appearance of these things to be able to copy them in word-pictures; and they can make this sort of copy of virtue without knowing nearly as much about the matter as any ordinary good man must know in order to *be* virtuous. (Did you ever hear of any people taking one of the poets for their master and guide, and following him in the way, for instance, the disciples of Pythagoras followed him? Of course not; even Homer and Hesiod were left to wander about the world alone. They could *write* about peace and war and victories and valour; but they did not know enough to teach anyone how to fight or capture a city.) The fact is, the poets are even farther removed from knowledge than this account suggests. For there are three

[1] It must be remembered that the "ancients" always counted the first of a series as being also the first in the reckoning from the beginning of the series. Thus Sunday was the third day from Friday—Friday being counted as the first in the succession. This explains how the artist comes to be called thrice removed from truth, not twice, as we should say.

degrees of knowledge involved here, not two ; and theirs is the third or lowest grade of all. We spoke just now as though the maker of a bedstead stood nearest, in knowledge of beds, to the Creator. But, in regard to most things, the man who is nearest to real knowledge is the man who knows how to *use* a thing ; and after him comes the man who knows how to make the thing. Thus, the flute player knows more about flutes than the flute-maker ; the rider knows more about saddles and bridles than the saddler ; and so on. Consequently we may say that the skilled user has knowledge, and the maker has right opinion, derived from the skilled user's knowledge ; but the imitator, below both in the scale, has nothing but ignorance. Or look at this matter of faculties in another way. We know that the faculties of sight and hearing are very deceptive : they give numerous confused and contradictory impressions which the reason alone can analyse, correct and unify. We know also that the internal faculty of feeling is similarly deceptive, and subjects us to countless impressions of pleasure and pain, joy and grief, whose multiplicity breeds hopeless confusion in our minds unless checked and corrected by reason. Well, just as the painter and musician imitate the objects which appeal to the deceptive senses of sight and hearing, so the poet imitates the things which appeal to feeling, and he is therefore concerned with the irrational part of the soul. And he not only appeals to feeling with his word-pictures ; he is also constantly exciting our feelings and encouraging us to give way to them. He shows us good men suffering and lamenting their sufferings. He draws out our admiration for them so that we think their lamentations are quite right and proper : he draws out our sympathy too, so that we weep with them as well as for them ; and then, when *our* troubles come, it follows that we think it right to weep for ourselves. That, Glaucon, is the real curse of tragedy and imitative poetry. Its influence is dead against that unruffled serenity which we have seen to be the mark of the really good man ; it undermines his steadfastness ; it unmans the noblest part of the man. " For poetry waters and cherishes those emotions which ought to wither with drought," the emotions of grief and anger and desire, which, in the steadfast soul, never appear at all.

But it is not pleasant, Glaucon, to dismiss poetry like this,

even though what we say is quite in line with the well-known antagonism between poetry and philosophy. I am not blind to the charms of poetry: indeed, I know what it is to feel its enchantment. But now truth is at stake—a far bigger thing than the charm of what pleases us. "And I have learned that we must not make a serious pursuit of any poetry that may delight us, in the belief that it grasps truth and is good. On the contrary, we must be on our guard against it, because we realise its danger to our souls. . . ."

What does Plato mean by all this? What can have induced him, of all people—Greek, artist, and himself a poet—to deal so savagely with art, and, most of all, the poetic art? How shall we explain or excuse an attack which seems to be not only unreasonable but even in bad taste? At the end of the whole passage Plato pretends to excuse himself by a playful reference to the long-standing feud between philosophy and poetry. But clearly this excuse will not serve. We all know that philosophers are inclined to be suspicious of poetry, partly because the latter attaches our emotions to an object, or leads us by feeling alone to a conclusion, without any of the rational analysis and criticism which are so necessary; partly, too, because all art tends to focus the attention upon the "particulars" of sense impressions, rather than upon the "generalia" of science. For this reason, the method of poetry may be said to be dangerous and delusive. But Plato is the last person who should use this argument. His "philosophy," as expounded in the *Republic*, is very different from the rational philosophy of the intellectualists; and its "method" is at least as dangerous as that of art. For it struggles to the vision of truth by the aid of a faculty as far removed from reason as the artistic perception itself: its "intuition" seems to be very much more akin to the latter than to the analytic or synthetic intellect of the rational philosopher. Moreover, it is probably wrong to say that Plato was not personally conscious of the ennobling influence of art. Unlike a Mill or a Darwin, he could never say that his æsthetic sense had been starved. In his youth he felt the fascination of art to the full. He loved and admired the great tragedians of Greece, Æschylus and Sophocles; he loved and admired the work of Phidias too; he had himself been a poet, and might have been a very great one; and all his writings breathe the highest artistic spirit—so much so that

in some dialogues he even identifies beauty with the supreme good. Yet we know that, when he came into contact with Socrates, he was induced to abandon poetry altogether.

A rather more satisfactory, but still very incomplete, explanation is found in his conception of the essential nature of the soul. His psychology, and its relation to the whole theory of the path to Wisdom, compel him to assign a rather humble position to the artistic faculties. In Book VII he distinguishes carefully between two kinds of impressions of objects: those which stimulate reflection and discrimination and those which do not. Only the former (among which impressions of numbers and mathematical objects are pre-eminent) are really aids to philosophy; the latter do not help at all. Now it is clear that all artistic perception deals with impressions of the second class—impressions which do not stimulate discrimination. "Therefore," as he says in Book X, "imitation is an amusement and not a serious business"; that is to say, not serious by comparison with *the* business of the soul.

It may also be urged, and, indeed, this is obvious from the text, that the ethic of his Wisdom-Religion carries with it a condemnation of art as a *pursuit*. He is so intent upon the need of utter simplicity of soul that he cannot tolerate any influence which tends towards complexity, or towards elaboration of unnecessary tastes and sentiments and interests. But art is one of the great variety agents. Therefore the good soul must shun its fascination.

Again, it is possible to find both explanation and excuse for the almost contemptuous treatment of Homer. In Book III, Plato takes Homer's poetry as a kind of popular Bible of the Greeks, and criticises its moral and religious teaching unmercifully. In Book X he returns to the attack, on more general grounds. "People tell us," he says in effect, "that we should accept Homer as a great teacher; that he is the true educator of Greece; and that his doctrine deserves to be accepted as our rule of life in all our private and public affairs. But, besides the defects of his moral teaching, he has none of the marks of the great teacher. He had no followers: he founded no school: he inspired no disciples: he gave no valid rule of life." He then proceeds to contrast Homer with Pythagoras, who *did* inspire a band of disciples, who *did* lay down for them a way of

life, who *did* found a lasting school, and gained the confidence of followers who believed so strongly in his teaching as to cling to it in face of dire persecutions. This is significant in several ways. It has been said that Homer represented the old, popular, unilluminated, nature-religion of the Greeks, in sharp distinction from the inspired Orphic teaching which came from the East, and was always confined to the few. This Orphic teaching (very similar, it would seem, to the ancient Hindu Adyatma-vidya) appears to have been the basis of Pythagoras's doctrine and rule of life, with its austere asceticism, its voluntary poverty and community of goods, its belief in reincarnation, its respect for animal life, its mysticism and " inner " teaching, and its spiritual psychology and cosmogony. And after the persecution and dispersal of the Pythagorean brotherhood of Crotona, his disciples reappeared later under the title of " Orphic " brotherhoods.

Here, then, we appear to have part of the explanation of the strong antagonism felt against Homer by Plato, the undoubted follower of Pythagoras, and probably an initiate in the Orphic mysteries.

Another point may be noticed in this connection. The Pythagorean brotherhood consisted chiefly of the aristocracy of Crotona, and was finally attacked and dispersed by the democracy (at the beginning of the sixth century). And the Orphic successors in the fourth century became the butts of the satire of the comic poets of Athens—even as Socrates had been the butt of Aristophanes in the fifth century. No wonder Plato thought little of the " wisdom " of a democracy, or of the discernment of its popular poets !

But all these explanations leave something still unexplained. We feel that there must be some far greater issues at stake ; that Plato's banishment of art must have some deeper reason behind it. And here, I think, it will be best to go straight to the root of the matter, and make clear the undercurrent of profound principle which we may fairly assume to underlie the whole argument ; for this will put Plato's position in the plainest possible light, without any compromise, and without any need for defence or excuse.

We saw how, in the sixth and seventh books, he applied the process of discrimination to all our modes of thought and know-

ledge with the result that science (as *we* understand it) was degraded and placed in the lower half of the line which represents degrees of reality and truth. Even so, in this book, he applies the same principle of discrimination to our practices and appreciations connected with art. In the former case, he was using the intellectual dialectic; but now it is the moral dialectic which is brought to bear—the process of negation applied to the most subtle of all the influences to which the soul of man is subject. But he seems to go too far. The application of the intellectual dialectic merely put science in its place; the application of the moral dialectic leaves no place at all for art. So, at least, it would appear from the argument. But, in fact, this is not the case. Plato *has* left art its place in the ideal life—and a most important place. All education is founded upon it; the environment of healthy growth is permeated with it; art, at its best, is the great teacher of the young in the perfect State. For *that* is its function: to lead forth the feelings on the road to good just as far as progress depends upon feeling. It is by the best forms of art that the growing soul shall be made emotionally good, in tune with beauty, in love with ideal copies of the real. In this way, art not only has its place, but stands supreme among all the influences for good, leading the soul farther along the road to truth than any other influence.

But just here the danger comes in. Because art can do so much, we think that it can do more. We think that it can raise us to the highest; that by its help we can reach *the* Ideal. In the ecstasy produced by perfect music or the contemplation of perfect beauty, we believe that we are soaring to the highest heights. We sit in a cathedral and *feel* our spirit rising Godwards far more surely and swiftly than any intellectual exercise or meditation can uplift it. We read one of those marvellous poems which thrill the innermost chords of our being, and we feel that it brings to life the most God-like and holy parts of our souls. *This*, we say, is what the noblest art can do for us: it alone opens heaven within us; in it alone we lose all trace of earth and of our earthly selves, and touch divinity.

*Not so*, Plato would reply; this is art's great illusion. The ecstasy of the art-inspired soul is *not* the ecstasy of God-knowledge. It is only an emotional shadow of the true ecstasy—fleeting, impermanent, unreal. Dangerous, too, as are all extreme

emotional states. For if you think *these* are real, you will never reach the true vision of God. You will place a barrier between your soul and Him, all the harder to remove because you love it and idolise it. And the penalty of all emotional states will overtake you. As certainly as emotion is unstable, so certainly will reaction follow on realisation. You will rise to the heights only to fall again to deeper depths; you will seem to be in heaven to-day, but to-morrow you will be in the abyss of despondency and doubt. You worship your picture of the divine now, dreaming the while that you have really God before your eyes; but very soon you will awake and find that it is only a copy, and no reality at all.

No, my friends; there is no emotional path that leads all the way to the good. A point will come at which you must turn your back upon it, and face the colder, austerer pathway I have shown you, therein to walk upwards with mind indrawn and senses stilled, forgetting all beauties of sight and sound, applying to these the constant touchstone of dialectic—the incessant "Not this, not this" of discrimination; content to press upwards in faith towards the dim outline of Reality, which shall be beautiful to you only when you really reach it, and shall then shine with the unfading beauty of eternal spiritual light.

Now, regarded from this point of view, Plato's banishment of art and devotion to art from the higher training or conscious preparation for the religion of wisdom, seems to be not only intelligible but also inevitable. The apparent paradoxes in both argument and conclusion disappear: both are found to be in harmony with his whole doctrine—in harmony also with the Gnana Yoga of the Vedantins which he follows so closely. For, if there is a great gulf between the absolute truth revealed by Nous and the relative truths of our sciences, our philosophies, our beliefs, there is an even deeper gulf between the goal of Wisdom or Gnana, apprehended only through the discipline of pure noetic exercises, and the goal of art, the road to which is through devotion to sensuous imagery and emotional ecstasy. Plato has already dealt very faithfully with our sciences, our philosophies, our beliefs; he is now dealing equally faithfully with our art and our trust in it—*not* as an education and a delight for even the best of souls in the "good" life of the lower path (this he has already by implication conceded to us), but as a

delusion and a snare in the soul's austere struggle towards the full awakening of Nous.

Observe now the entire relevance of his arguments : the entire appropriateness, also, of their pitiless severity, intensified, as it always is for the Gnana Yogin, by the very fact of the *apparently* divine heights of ideal reality to which art leads us. What is the " faculty " on whose exercise it depends ? It is intuition or super-rational insight, you say. Granted : but is it not intuition based on *feeling* or emotion ? And is it not therefore a dangerous copy of the true insight, which (as has been shown, and as the very name of Nous implies) is, at any rate, akin to reason, is awakened by the exercise of reason at its best, and can only be reached by resolute suppression of the lower " emotional " faculties ? So, in loyalty to Nous, whose rival it appears to be, let us boldly call the artistic intuition a fraud. Masquerading as true intuition, and pretending to lead the soul to truth, it is really inferior not only to honest reason, but even to honest emotion too ; for these, at any rate, do not pose as being anything but what they are. Further, this artistic " faculty," which we thus see to be a false form of emotion (itself only a quasi-real thing), is much more deeply steeped in ignorance (avidya), and the illusion (Maya) which is the cause of ignorance, than are our ordinary feelings and perceptions. For these at least are quasi-real ; but a delusive form of them can have no contact with reality at all : it has, as it were, no root even in the quasi-realities of life to which our sense-perception is attached.

But it is creative, you say ?[1] Certainly ; and so are the senses, though far more truly so. But all " creation " is projection or superimposition of the unreal upon the real. The mind of the individual " creates " the world he lives in by projecting or superimposing the illusions of self upon it. But in this " creation," he superimposes illusion upon that which has *some* independent reality ; in other words, he superimposes the unreal upon the partly real. Not so the artist. He, too, " creates " by projection or superimposition. But his " creation " is far more illusory than that of the ordinary man, for he

[1] This paragraph may be hardly intelligible to those unfamiliar with Vedantic philosophy, and had better be passed over unread. It is a purely Vedantic argument ; but it is fairly closely akin to the argument used by Plato in the text.

is always superimposing—not the unreal upon the partly real, but—*his own reflections* of the unreal upon the partly real.

Now poetry is the worst of all forms of art just because, unlike all others, it wears a rational mask, and deludes us into thinking that we are reaching great heights of understanding by a short road in which our faculty of reason need hardly *work* at all. We can forgive a painter or a sculptor who does not pretend to make his appeal to anything but aisthesis or æsthetic sense, even if he does pretend that his "idea of beauty" has some real affinity to the true Idea. But we can *not* forgive a poet who, pretending that his appeal is made to our minds, pretends also that he is awakening super-mind within us, and so deludes us into imagining that he is leading us nearer to the Idea of truth.

There is one difficulty still to be considered. How does Plato's attitude to art compare with that of the Indian Vedantin? In one respect at least their agreement is complete. Art has no place in the Yogi's life; nor is there any place for it on the path of Gnana. Yet we find even a Vedantin uttering such words as these: "The drama in India is a very holy thing. Drama and music are themselves held to be religion. They say that song leads to the same goal as meditation." Is there not here a total opposition to Plato's estimate of art? I think not; and for two reasons. On the one hand, all such sayings as that quoted are the opinions of the followers of the path of Bhakti or devotion; they would not be uttered by those who have chosen the path of Gnana or Wisdom—the path with which alone Plato is concerned. On the other hand, it has been abundantly clear that Plato believes intensely in art in subordination to the needs of preparation for the spiritual life. Everything has its place—at its best—in this subordination. And the value of art, both in his view and in that of the Indian teachers of Gnana Yoga, may be compared to the value of symbols and the use of symbols: they are a necessary support and prop through many stages of preparation for the knowledge which needs no shadows to help it. We ordinary followers of religion cannot do without symbols, cannot do without even the worship of them in some form or other. All religions are idolatrous in this sense—including the Christian. And the symbol-worship is a good aid, if and so long as the spiritual meaning behind it is never lost sight of—as Roman Catholics and High Churchmen would assert is the case in *their*

symbol-worship, though they are very loth to allow the same plea in the case of the symbol-worship of others. But if and when the symbol itself is worshipped and the spiritual reality behind it forgotten, then it becomes the idolatry which is damnable. And this is just what Vedantists, with Plato, would say of art. Make it, if you will, the basis of all your early religious education : make it, as you must, the groundwork of the good environment in which the learning soul should live. Treat it in this way, as the servant of the spiritual life, and its dangers are gone. But if it is protested, as it is to-day, and as it was beginning to be among the Greeks in Plato's time, that art cannot reach its highest development in *any* subordination whatever, but must be free—a cult in itself, an end in itself—then, like everything else which makes such a claim, it must be " bowed out " of the good life. Plato saw, as we see to-day, the inevitable assertion of this claim, for art, like science and like every form of human effort which achieves great things, always tries at last to usurp wisdom's throne. And when the danger is upon us, when it is made either a blasphemy or a mark of the Philistine to suggest that art must be subordinate to morality or to the standards of religious life, when even good people cannot think of any way to lessen the materialism of their age save by increasing the attention paid to music and poetry ; then, indeed, we may echo the words of Plato—" Nothing seems to me, upon reflection, so satisfactory as the regulation we have made about the pursuit of imitative art, that it shall be banished from the State which we call good."

In the final pages of the *Republic* Plato introduces a proof of the immortality of the soul and an account of its life after death.

There is, he says, one last argument to be added in defence of Righteousness : some people may think it is the greatest of all. But as it has to do with the reward or punishment of the soul after death, it is necessary first to prove that the soul is immortal. This proof, Socrates tells us, is much easier than we suppose. We know that every physical thing perishes most surely and most easily in consequence of some malady appropriate to its nature : our bodies die of disease, timber decays through rot, rust eats away iron, and so on. Other influences may appear to destroy these things ; but they can only do so by first pro-

ducing the appropriate malady. Our bodies may perish because of bad food, we say ; it is not, however, the badness of the food, but the badness or diseased state of the body produced by the bad food which really causes the bodily death. We may, in fact, assert that nothing except its own connatural evil can really destroy anything ; and if a thing is not destroyed by its own connatural evil, then we must conclude that it is indestructible. If rust left iron unweakened, we should not expect anything else to corrupt it ; if disease did not harm the body, we should not believe that any external agency could destroy it.

Now the soul has its own peculiar evil or malady, which we call wickedness. But no one can maintain that this kills the soul, or even weakens it. We could almost wish it did, for then wickedness would put a speedy end to itself, and would itself provide the release from its own evils. But unfortunately we know that evil souls are remarkably vigorous : it is a matter of common observation that the wicked wax fat and kick, instead of quickly dying of their depravity. If, then, wickedness, the soul's own peculiar disease, cannot weaken or destroy the soul, no alien evil or disaster can do so ; and we may infer that it is immortal.

Now consider what this implies. If souls are immortal, then there must always be, and must always have been, the same number of souls in existence. They cannot become fewer : and no new ones can be created—for such creation would involve turning the mortal into the immortal, and that could not happen. Further, this imperishable thing, the soul, must be naturally pure and single in its essence : if there was any trace of variety or difference of substance in it, then it could not be eternal ; it would contain the seeds of decay. Clearly, then, it must be wonderfully pure and beautiful in its nature ; and you must try to think of it in this light—not as it imperfectly appears " when marred by association with the physical body and other evil things." For now it resembles the mythical sea-god, whose appearance is so distorted by the waves and by incrustations of shell and weed that we cannot recognise him for a god. But you must think of the soul as utterly pure and free from all disfigurements ; and you will do this best if you fix your attention upon the genuinely spiritual part of it, the part that is akin to Wisdom. In this way alone can you realise what its divine nature is, and what it would become if only it could be liberated

from that uncouth multitude of earthy substances with which it is now overgrown, as a result of the indulgences which we call pleasures.

And now, Glaucon, since the soul lives for ever, we may fairly claim for the righteous soul the rewards which its future life will bring. All through our long defence of Righteousness we have refused to consider these, for we undertook to show that Righteousness meant Happiness, apart from all rewards or honours, here or hereafter. But now it is fair to remember that the righteous man does *not* go unrewarded all his days. The gods are not mistaken as to his real character; and whom the gods love they surely reward at the last. It does not matter what the good man's lot in life may be: "whether poverty befall him or sickness or any other of the things which men call evil, you will find that they all work together for his final good, either in this life or the next." The gods never neglect the man who has done his best to become god-like. And it is false to think that men neglect him either. They may not realise at first how well he is running his race; but at the close he will be hailed as victor, and will receive the prizes which men give to those they honour.

But far, far greater are the rewards which the good man reaps after the body's death. Listen to the story of Er, and then you will understand what righteousness brings to the soul in the next world. Er was the son of Arminius, a native of Pamphylia; and we are told that he was killed in battle, but that, when the bodies of the dead were being taken up for burial ten days later, it was found that Er's body was not at all decomposed; and on the twelfth day, as he lay on the funeral pyre, he came to life again, and told what he had seen in the other world. His story was that his soul had travelled, along with many others, to the double gate of judgment, where all the souls were divided, according to the judgment passed upon them, into two companies, to pass on, the one company through the right gate upwards into heaven, the other through the left gate downwards beneath the earth—every soul carrying with it the record of its past deeds. Er was not allowed to pass on, but was bidden to stay and watch; and he next saw two other companies, not going but returning, through two similar gates—the one coming down from heaven, the other coming up from below,

the one pure and bright, the other squalid and dusty, each arriving from its long sojourn in the place of reward or the place of punishment. And these two companies passed together into a meadow, and there the souls all mingled together and told each other their experiences. Each, it seemed, had spent a thousand years, in heaven or in purgatory—for it is ordained that each soul shall live ten times over the cycle of deserved reward or deserved punishment, and each cycle, of a hundred years, corresponds to the fullest span of human life. Tenfold penalty and tenfold recompense had each received for the evil or the good of his last life on earth. And now, the debts all paid, they were come together to the threshold of a new life. But not all the souls could pay their debts, even in a thousand years. Er heard of some incurably wicked people—chiefly tyrants, but with a few extraordinarily bad private individuals among them—who were not allowed to leave purgatory at the end of their thousand years, but were driven back for renewed tortures. And in like manner, the rewards of the pre-eminently good souls were proportionately prolonged.

At the end of seven days, all the returning souls were compelled to leave the meadow, and to travel for three days, until they reached a place overlooking a great pillar of light, which runs right across the whole heaven and earth, and binds the universe together. And there they saw the universe revolving on this axis of pure light, turned by the distaff of Necessity—the universe itself consisting of eight concentric whorls, revolving each in its own way, with varied degrees of speed, each distinguished from the others by differences of thickness and differences of radiance, and also differences of sound. For each whorl or sphere gives out a note of its own as it spins, the whole eight forming a single harmony. And the three Fates, the daughters of Necessity, sit round on thrones, their hands keeping up the motion of the whorls of the universe, while their voices chant the events of which each is mistress—Lachesis, the events of the past, Clotho, those of the present, Atropos, those of the future.

Now as soon as the souls were assembled, a herald took from the lap of Lachesis, the Fate of past deeds, a number of lots, and also a number of destinies or plans of life. And he threw the lots among the souls, for each to pick up as chance directed; but the destinies he spread upon the ground for all to see. Then

he told the souls that they were on the point of beginning a new cycle of mortal life, and were now to choose the earthly life or destiny which each preferred. For their destinies were not allotted to them, but were to be chosen by each. "With the chooser lies the responsibility: heaven is guiltless."

The kinds of lives displayed were of every sort, both human and animal, and far outnumbered the souls who were to make their choice, so that the choice of the last to come forward should be as free as that of the first. And this, Glaucon, is apparently the supreme moment for the soul, when everything turns upon the choice it makes; for this reason, above all others, is it our duty to pursue, to the neglect of every other matter, the knowledge which shall haply enable a man to discriminate between a good and an evil life, and to choose, always and everywhere, the life that is really good. With iron resolution must a man, when he enters the future life, hold fast to the faith in righteousness and its excellence, in spite of all appearances; so that when his turn comes he may make his choice aright.

But to return to the souls whom Er was watching. When the word was given, the soul who had drawn the first lot advanced and chose, without a moment's thought, the life of the greatest tyrant he could find. Poor headlong fool! He was one of those who had come from heaven; he had lived his last life on earth in a well-ordered State, and so had acquired a kind of virtue dependent on habit, but unaided by philosophy. Indeed, according to Er, more than half the souls who were deluded into making a bad choice had spent their thousand years in heaven, and had never felt the discipline of affliction. The others, who had been in purgatory, were more careful; experience of trouble made them so.

Strange were many of the choices made—the choosers being in most cases guided by the experience of their former life. The soul of Orpheus chose the life of a swan: he refused to be born of a woman again, since women had caused his death. Ajax, too, and Agamemnon refused to be men again, and chose, the one a lion's, the other an eagle's life. He saw, too, the souls of animals choosing the lives of men. The last lot of all had fallen to Odysseus, whose memory of his former sufferings had so worn away his ambition that he searched diligently among the destinies until he found a quiet, obscure life, which all the others

had despised. And this he chose gladly, saying that his choice would have been just the same if he had drawn the first lot.

Then, when all had chosen, they were taken in turn before Lachesis, who assigned to each his Genius, to be the guardian of the life chosen, and the fulfiller of his choice. Then Clotho ratified the destiny of each, and Atropos made it irrevocable ; and then all together passed under the throne of Necessity, and so into the plain of Forgetfulness, where flows the river of Unmindfulness. And of this water each soul must drink a certain portion, and so forget the past. But some, who were not protected by wisdom, drank more than they needed. And at last, when midnight came, there was thunder and an earthquake, and in a moment the souls were driven up to their birth, like shooting stars. And then Er, who had not been allowed to drink of the river, awoke, and found himself lying on the funeral pyre.

In this way, Glaucon, the story has won through to us ; and we shall win through, if we are obedient to its teaching ; for so we shall pass over the river of Lethe safely, and our souls will not be defiled. Let us then hold fast to the upward path, and follow after Righteousness and Wisdom always, that so it may be well with us, both in this life and in the long life to come.

Plato's proof of the immortality of the soul need not be taken very seriously. He would have been the first to admit that in such a matter proof is beside the point. The whole of the real teaching of the *Republic* (and, I think, of all his other writings) rests on the assumption of the spiritual nature of man ; and faith in immortality can only become more than faith for the few who, reaching the vision of reality, find that the one supreme certainty is the existence of the eternal spirit, theirs and God's. But Plato attempts to prove the fact, partly perhaps because this is the only way of keeping up the illusion that all his arguments are on the intellectual plane, and therefore worthy of attention by the intellectualist thinkers who will certainly form the majority of his readers ; partly also because, like all of us, he cannot help doing his best to give demonstration of the truth in which he believes, and so to make it more acceptable to others.

It is significant that he elaborates " proofs " of immortality in some of his other works (e.g. the *Phædo* and the *Phædrus*), and that all the " proofs " are quite different. This is entirely

natural. I imagine that most of us who believe in the soul's immortality believe in it very much as we believe in the existence of God or of good. We feel it to be part of the eternal *fact* which holds our universe together as something intelligible and real; it is everywhere, in everything, an element of the reality of life for us. We do not want proofs: we simply do not trouble ourselves about anything so trivial. Yet, again and again, if we chance to be of a rational or even an argumentative temperament, we find ourselves formulating so-called proofs, either in our discussion with others or in our own thoughts. And, like Plato, we find ourselves putting forward different proofs at different times, relying now upon this argument, now upon that. Moreover, we are quite in earnest in the matter: we are not at all pretending, or playing with a rational process which we know cannot carry us to anything absolute. We do very seriously try to *prove* our great fact: our arguments are as serious as Paley's evidences; and yet in our hearts, when we face the matter quietly, we smile at our own serious efforts. This is all part of the eternal paradox of reason and intuition (or faith): it forces us into the rôle of intellectualists even against our better judgment; for there is no other way of expressing our faith to others, and impressing them with it—except, indeed, the supremely difficult way of silently living it.

Putting the matter in another way, and following Plato's classification of conditions in relation to knowledge, we may say that, in regard to fundamental facts, there are just three conditions possible: ignorance, faith and the direct vision which is also absolute knowledge. Our ignorance may be either the complete ignorance of atheism or the conjecture (eikasia) of carelessness. Our faith may be either the doxical (or dogmatic) belief of good, orthodox people, or the much higher recognition of reflections or shadows of spiritual reality everywhere. Direct vision has, of course, no varieties, but is always one and the same. Of these conditions, the last alone lifts us completely beyond the range of argument and proof: it is the condition of the Muni, the Seer or the silent one, who teaches most by the example of his life, a little by parables, but by argument hardly at all. Plato never pretended to have reached this condition: he had not himself seen the Good. But, of the two stages of faith, even the higher is still " dianoetic " or intel-

lectual enough to require rational expression, and sometimes to demand and attempt rational proof. Proof is not necessary to anyone who has reached that stage: the vision of even the shadows of reality is worth all the arguments of all the wise men of all the ages. Still, since knowledge is not yet made absolute, the human desire for rational proof remains, and is bound at times to find expression. Hence the repeated attempts of Plato—and many other good people—to prove to an unseeing world, by all varieties of argument, that God exists or that the soul is deathless.

The importance of the passage lies in the deductions he draws from the fact of immortality. In these he is entirely in agreement with the Eastern doctrine, which is much more logical than the position adopted by most Christians. According to the Vedic philosophy, immortality does not refer to the future only, but equally to the past. The soul that *will* live on for ever *has* lived for ever too. There can be no such thing as a special creation of new souls incarnating, as embryo immortals, in human infants. Every soul has an infinitely long record of life behind it, as well as an infinitely long prospect in front. This record of past life is a record of innumerable incarnations, in every grade of existence up to and including the human. Deferring for a moment the explanation of this doctrine of reincarnation and its relation to Plato's version of the subject, it is necessary here to point out that the phrase "immortality of the *soul*" is not quite accurate. The eternal principle or part in every human being is the Atman or Spirit. This Atman alone is absolutely real, for it alone is divine—the God in man, or, as we sometimes call it, the divine spark in us. But this Atman is not the same as the soul. I confess that the distinction is not easy to explain: perhaps it may be made clear in this way. At the beginning of creation, when God began the age-long process of evolution and involution, of unfolding into the manifest and folding back again into the unseen, the Divine Reality must be conceived as changing its unity into diversity—the one into the many—like a fire throwing off innumerable sparks. This is the first condition of any manifestation. Each of the innumerable sparks then combines with, or clothes itself in, Reality's opposite—Matter, or that which is not real—thus becoming a changing phenomenal thing. This is the second condition of manifestation, and may

be called figuratively the descent into matter. Once begun, the process of change continues, form succeeding form along an infinite series, according to evolutionary law. The Atman or divine spark does not itself change or evolve, for it is unchangeable even as it is absolutely real; but the matter in which it takes form suffers change and decay. And we may conceive the Atman as clothed in garments of varying degrees of permanence and impermanence, of fineness or coarseness. What we call the soul is such a garment, complex and of different degrees of fineness; and the finest part of this complex soul is so nearly permanent that it may be called age-long, for it accompanies the Atman or Spirit through the whole cycle of evolution and involution, serving, as it were, the purpose at once of garment and of vehicle. It is this enduring soul which persists through all incarnations, learning, suffering, undergoing every sort of experience, growing in grace, until at last it, too, is refined away —the last " form," the last envelope of matter which the Atman discards, even as it was the first to be put on. And the Atman, divine in substance at the end as at the beginning, may be regarded as being imprisoned in this soul, and in all the other garments or envelopes, including the very coarse one which we know as the physical body. *It*—the Spirit—does not evolve; *it* does not change; it cannot even be said to learn anything during the process. It falls asleep and wakes again: it forgets and remembers: or, more accurately, since it is ridiculous to predicate sleeping or forgetting of the eternal reality, we must say that it *seems* to sleep and to forget. But it is all-knowing and all-conscious: and the whole process of age-long manifestation is, as it were, a process of holding up a mirror to its own implicit knowledge and experience.

This, the true aspect of immortality, is the one expressed in the well-known lines from the *Bhagavad Gita* :—

" Never the Spirit was born, the Spirit shall cease to be never,
Never was time it was not: End and Beginning are dreams.
Birthless and deathless and changeless the Spirit remaineth for ever,
Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the house of it seems."

Or again :—

" Nay, but as when one layeth
His worn-out robes away,
And, taking new ones, sayeth
' These will I wear to-day,'

So putteth by the Spirit
Lightly its garb of flesh,
And passeth to inherit
A residence afresh."

In both these passages, it is the Spirit or Atman which is described as being eternal, not any of its robes or houses.

It would, I know, require many pages to make these conceptions even moderately intelligible ; and I have not the requisite ability or knowledge for the task. I am only trying to reproduce enough of the Vedanta doctrine to make Plato's position clear. And the main points are these : So long as the Atman is involved in the process of manifestation—is passing through the cycle of change and decay—so long it is enveloped in garments which, in greater or less degree, are subject to change and decay. These garments form the mask of personality—a personality which is really changing from day to day, obviously and rapidly changing, if we regard the outermost or most superficial parts of it, but in the innermost parts changing so slowly as to seem to us almost permanent. All our normal consciousness, with its desires and feelings, its thoughts and speculations, is a mode of this changing personality. Part of it is obviously changeable, most of all that part which is dependent upon its relation to a physical body and to the physical universe. Part is less obviously subject to change—that part which (so it is asserted) functions independently of the physical body, and therefore continues to function after the body's death. But this part also is changing, growing purer, we hope, as it learns the lessons of life after life in physical and in super-physical worlds, to become at last so transparently pure as to be no more a covering or envelope at all. And all through the process, the Atman is like a spiritual eye, wholly clouded over so long as the envelope is dense with the mud of lust or opaque with the dust of personal interests, but coming to its own kingdom of light and sight as the purification becomes more complete.

I cannot hope that even now this account will be very intelligible to anyone. But at least it will serve to illustrate Plato's version of the doctrine of immortality. As he is writing popularly, he does not carefully distinguish between the relative immortality of the higher soul, and the absolute immortality of the spirit. Popular thought really never carries the idea or hope of im-

mortality much beyond a conception of *some* continued existence of personality in some other world, better, it is hoped, than this one, and peopled with a selection of the same persons. We just hope to awake on the other side of the grave very much as we now are—only considerably improved in condition—and surrounded by our friends and a few of our relations—also very much as they now are, only vastly improved in temper. Consequently it is natural that Plato should be content to describe just such a continued existence for the soul, but adding its obvious moral lessons. But, as in Book VII, so here he does refer to the really divine part of the soul—the part akin to wisdom ; and he describes, in language which might have been taken direct from the Hindu scriptures, the " incrustation of the spirit in the impurities of this world," in the mud and weeds of desire which hide the God within us.[1]

To the doctrine of immortality, thus popularly expounded, Plato adds an equally popular account of the doctrine of reincarnation. Now I am very far from insisting that he must have borrowed this from an Indian source. The belief in reincarnation has been an integral part of the faith of the followers of numerous religions, from the Hindus to the Druids ; it is so widespread as to give good reason for supposing that it formed a part of the earliest revelation made to man. The wonder is that it was ever allowed to drop out of the Christian faith. It is clear, therefore, that the doctrine might have found its way into a Greek mind from any one of several different sources. But when it appears side by side with many other essential elements of the Hindu teaching, as it undoubtedly does in the doctrines of Pythagoras, and as I have tried to show that it does also in the philosophy of Plato, then it is fair to assume that it was derived directly from India. And this assumption is borne out by the details with which the doctrine is presented. For, although the account of the return of souls to human life is purposely given in a popular form, it contains most of the important points of the Hindu doctrine. The souls of the dead have a long sojourn in another form of existence, whose character—heavenly or purgatorial or penal—is determined by their past life and deeds.

[1] A much more elaborate account of the constitution of the soul is given in the Timæus, a later dialogue. But it is beyond the scope of my present task to comment upon this.

Its period is not fixed: several centuries may be the normal length for most souls, while for some great sinners a longer period of punishment is required, and for some very good souls a longer period of heavenly happiness may be allowed. Plato seems to suggest—but he does not actually say so—that a few "incurably wicked" souls, like Ardiæus the tyrant, are kept in hell for ever. This is certainly not the Indian doctrine. The soul of a tyrant would return to physical existence, but on an immeasurably lower level than the human; and its "hell" would consist in having to work its way up again, through many forms of lower life, always carrying with it the consciousness of its fall. There is, I think, only one statement in Plato's account which really seems to conflict with Hindu thought; and that is his assertion that Orpheus chose the life of a swan. This, at first sight, is hopelessly unintelligible. Orpheus was regarded as the great enlightened teacher of Greece. The Orphic mysteries were the most profound of all—as Plato certainly knew; and the persecuted followers of Pythagoras adopted the title of Orphic brotherhoods. How then could such a very "advanced" soul fall back into the body of an animal? Even a return to a human existence would be impossible. There is a very simple explanation of Plato's apparent mistake. Orpheus is represented as passing into the form of a swan. If Plato knew anything at all of Indian allegory, he must have known that the swan (Hamsa) is in Hinduism the invariable symbol of the immortal Spirit; and to say, as he does, that Orpheus chose the life of a swan, refusing to be born again of a woman, is just an allegorical way of saying that he passed on into the spiritual life, having come to an end of mortal existence. I imagine (though I do not know) that any Indian Vedantin, reading the passage, would interpret it naturally in this way. But it is not worth while making much of the point: it is quite as possible that Plato, in giving a very popular account of the reincarnation of souls, fell into some inaccuracies, as that he concealed a deeper meaning beneath an apparent confusion.

I am obliged to harp upon the popular character of the account of reincarnation given in the tenth book for two reasons. One is that the whole account of the soul's rewards and punishments is, like the arguments about happiness in the ninth book, intended to be a popular addition which may give force to the real argu-

ments concerning Righteousness in the eyes of many people, but which does not really add anything to the conclusion reached in the seventh book. The other reason is that all accounts of heaven or hell or reincarnation are outside the true spiritual teaching of religion—are but trimmings, in fact, which appeal to us reward-loving and curiosity-consumed souls who *cannot* be content with the essential fact of spiritual existence. It is the case, I believe, that the truest teachers seldom say anything which will satisfy our curiosity about the details of past or future lives. In the purest Vedanta teaching the fact of reincarnation is asserted, and its moral lessons explained; but no questions are answered about the thousand and one matters upon which we should like to have information. The reasons are obvious. There is only one thing needful: that we should fix our whole attention upon the possibility—and the path—of the spiritual realisation which will carry us beyond all births and deaths, all departures and returns, all heavens and purgatories. It will not help us to speculate about the kind of life we may have lived before or the kind of life we shall live next time. The natural tendency of human curiosity (with or without any sinister motive) is to ask, "Had this man sinned, or was it his parents' fault that he was born blind?" And the true teacher always brushes away the question, and brings us back to the sole essential matter—the possibility of the manifestation of the grace of God. Further, the very word "reincarnation" is not the right one upon which to fix our thoughts. The great fact behind it is Re-birth: that is, birth into spiritual life. Heaven and purgatory and hell are all facts: but they are little facts. The normal chain of mortal lives is a fact: but it is a little fact. On the lower path we pass repeatedly from one corruptible to another corruptible through a long series of "raisings-up and layings-down of other and of other life-abodes." The wise man knows these facts, and neither fears nor cares; for beyond them all is the big fact of re-birth into the incorruptible and eternal life.

At the same time, the *moral* aspect of the doctrine of reincarnation is not a small matter, but one of the very deepest importance; and it is generally expressed by the law of Karma, by which the chain of mortal lives is determined. The word Karma, like many of the Sanskrit philosophical terms, has first of all a cosmic significance from which the ethical and religious meanings are

derived. It has the same root as the word " creation," this root meaning to do or to act. The constant signification of Karma is actions and results, or the law of action and reaction. When we speak of *our* Karma, we mean our own creation of destiny : that is, the results of the totality of our past acts, desires and thoughts, which determine our present and our future. The law of Karma may be regarded as the law of causation operative in all existence. We are all subject to the law so long as our lives are merged in the material universe. Every action and every thought have their inevitable reactions, for us as well as for others. Our lot in any life is the sum-total of these reactions. But this complete subjection to the law of causation does not involve determinism. Free will enters all along the line. We cannot alter the results of past actions ; but we can alter the *quality* of those results by our present use of them, and we are ourselves at every moment the conscious creators of our future destiny.

Consequently, in relation to our desires and actions, the law of Karma means the law of just reward and penalty. According to the law, every event in our conduct is followed, sooner or later, by its inevitable result—for us. But the working of the law is slow : justice often moves " with a lame foot." The effect of our actions may not be worked out in this lifetime, in which the general circumstances may be already fixed. But other lifetimes are to follow ; and in these the whole setting of our life, and many of its sufferings and satisfactions will be what we have made them, the sure sequel of our treatment of this life, or the full growth of the seeds of Karma which we are now sowing.

These seeds of Karma we carry with us from life to life in the form of what is called our Samskar, the latent memory-record of all past acts and desires which every soul contains and carries with it in every life. This Samskar is, as it were, the agent through which Karma works upon us. It is a constantly operative agent which partially determines all our activities. It resembles an ever-present impulse or bundle of impulses pushing us towards certain ways of acting and thinking. It is thus the explanation of the character and tendencies with which each of us is born. But we are not normally conscious of it in our human life ; the memory is latent : every soul—as Plato puts it—is

bound to drink of the river of Unmindfulness before it returns to mortal existence. Much of our knowledge, like much of our character, is due to its working; many of our intuitions are recognitions of truths learned long ago; in this sense to know is to remember, as Plato also held. But its work is subconscious: only very rarely is the recognition a conscious one.

It now becomes clear why the goal of religion, which is regarded as liberation or salvation from the turmoil and sufferings of our unstable existence, may be even more truly regarded as freedom from Karma and the seeds of Karma, or liberation from the fruit of works, or salvation from sin and the power of sin. And it becomes clear also why one of the chief conditions of liberation is desirelessness, or the condition of not caring about results as they affect *us*. The soul that has learned to do all for the glory of God, not for any reward or result for itself, has already potentially freed itself from Karma. The law of action and reaction has no more hold upon it; and it is saved. For such a soul, the seeds of Karma are said to be all burnt out; and it has no more need of re-birth into mortal life, for there are no more debts to be paid. Freedom from the wheel of change, freedom from works, freedom from mortal existence, freedom from Karma and freedom from sin, are all one and the same thing.

It becomes clear, again, why the final condition of liberation is represented as knowledge or wisdom. Just as reason supersedes instinct, so knowledge of reality, or true Vidya, alone can supersede Samskar and all its influences. The soul that "knows itself," and in so doing knows its own spiritual reality, not only knows its Samskar, but knows it for what it is—a seed-bed of tendencies and impulses which may be sterilised in an instant by "union with the will of God." Behind the Samskar is the divine spark of Nous or Atman, ready to burn it away the moment the covering of illusion is removed, just as behind Karma is God the unchangeable, ready to burn away the whole chain of phenomenal causation when the great barrier of Maya is destroyed.

But the road to liberation is a long one, and the soul must live many times over before it can learn the final lesson. Therefore it must return to physical existence again and again, each time with increased opportunities of learning. For though it does not now recognise that its present sufferings are the result

of its own past deeds, in the interval between each mortal life it becomes conscious of its Samskar or memory-record of the past, and so is forced to realise the justice of Karma. This interval, spent in a mode of existence more or less like heaven or more or less like purgatory, is also determined, both as to its character and as to its duration, by Karma—now recognised as just reward or punishment. The law of causation may lead anywhere—to a heaven or to a hell. But both the heaven and the hell are temporary destinies: whether the destiny or deserts which we have earned be happy or unhappy, we exhaust them in time, and then return to another "ordinary" life. We win heaven by striving ardently to deserve heaven, and by striving successfully. Our reward *is* heaven—for a thousand years, perhaps. But we must come back to finish our lesson of life: the winner of heaven has still to learn not to desire any rewards; and it may be that heaven is not good for us. Hence the Vedantist assertion that those who strive after heaven are not to be envied. They are weaving chains for themselves—pleasant chains, but chains none the less. And salvation means escape from all chains. For those who long for heaven have not yet learned to long for God: we are brought back once more to the terribly hard saying of Spinoza, that we have not really learned to love Him until we no longer care whether He loves or hates us in return.

In each mortal life, the soul which incarnates in a human body becomes subject to the limitations of human consciousness, and therefore forgets the past. But in each new birth it starts where its past has placed it, and where its own destiny has led it. And the soul that has profited much from its former lessons is, during its human life, on a higher level than before: enough of Samskar or memory (or anamnesis) will force its way through the human envelope to guide and control it. Thus we may speak of "advanced" souls—always conspicuous for their quality, even, in many cases, from childhood. And the most "advanced" of all, such as the soul of Socrates appears to have been, may be so near the condition of freedom as to be able to put aside the limits of human consciousness at will, and to hold communion with the spirit within. This, indeed, is open to all—if only we can free ourselves enough from the preoccupations of the flesh and the world, can force the outward-turning conscious-

ness inwards, and so withdraw into the " chamber of the heart " and be still. For it is to be noted that, though the scheme of evolution seems to involve us in a fixed order of development, with all the slow steps predetermined by necessary sequences of cause and effect, nevertheless it is open to every soul to quicken the development (or retard it) by right (or by wrong) choice. All souls *will* become free at last, after many lives. But your soul or mine *may* become free in this lifetime—if we will.

The whole of this Vedanta doctrine of Karma and Samskar, of the causation of destiny for the reincarnating soul, and of the interval-existence in heaven or hell, is treated popularly by Plato. Like a true Vedantin, he excludes it all from the *real* gospel of liberation: heaven and rewards, reincarnation and destiny, are of no importance to the true Philosopher. So the account of these things, like all the references to theology and religion as popularly understood, is relegated to the simpler parts of the book.[1] Rewards of righteousness—meaningless for the perfected soul—are brought in as a last argument for our world-absorbed minds. But, as any reader may see for himself, the account is a correct enough reproduction of the Indian doctrine, at any rate in essentials; while the moral lessons of the doctrine are very clearly explained. Plato is careful to emphasise the combination of free choice with the strong element of necessity attaching to Karma. Every destiny is taken from the lap of Lachesis, the fate of past deeds; each soul is supposed to choose its destiny; but the choice itself is predetermined (in great part) by the blind reactions of experience. It is significant here, and characteristic of both the Platonic and the Vedanta teaching, that the worst choice is made by souls who have come from heaven, not from purgatory, who have had an easy and pleasant time, without any taste of the waters of affliction, and who have been virtuous in the past only because habit, induced by favourable circumstances, has made them so. But the choice

[1] He presents it all in the form of a myth—a common device of his, when he wishes to expound a doctrine which is likely to appear extravagant or foolish to an intellectual Greek reader. But he never puts his deepest philosophy into allegorical form. For the presentation of that he adopts the still more ingenious device—as in the *Republic*—of putting it in a form capable of different interpretations, so that an intellectualist will find in it matter worthy of serious attention, without suspecting that its real meaning is something which, if baldly stated, would be dismissed by him as mystical or obscurantist or otherwise ridiculous.

may be made with full consciousness and knowledge. In proportion as the soul can hold fast to "right belief," in that degree will the choice be safe; and if it has gained any measure of genuine knowledge, then it will pass over the river of Lethe safely, not only choosing the life that is good, but also carrying with it into that life the knowledge that is needful for its salvation. The really determining factors are, as always, the vice that is ignorance and the virtue that is knowledge; or, as we should say, the normal character that is nothing more—nor less—than our chosen estimate of things good and things evil, the order of our moral universe which we have built up for ourselves by countless acts of will in the past.

# PART V

# SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

## CHAPTER XII

### DISCUSSION OF THE DOCTRINE IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN THOUGHT

WE have reached the end of the *Republic* and of the interpretation of its teaching. It only remains for me now to connect and contrast some of its doctrines with some of the characteristic assumptions of our own thought and faith. But before attempting so perilous a task, I would like to disarm criticism on a few fundamental matters. There are some elements in the doctrine, as I have presented it, which must certainly arouse the hostility of the Western mind, and will cause both thinkers and believers —both the votaries of science and the votaries of religion—to rush forward in solid waves of attack. In order to examine the grounds of this hostility, let me boldly group together the most obviously objectionable elements in the argument. They are, I think, just these :—

The distinction between the path of pursuit (or life as we know it), and the path of religion (or life as we do not know it, and do not particularly wish to know it).

The distinction between the goodness we understand and value, and a goodness called real, few of whose features we can even recognise as good.

The distinction between the religion and faith which are everything to many of us, and a religion which seems so little religious as to have no place for belief in a personal God and our devotion to Him.

The distinction between the positive scientific knowledge

which is the great hope of progressive civilisation, and a "science" which, while pretending to supersede human knowledge, offers no credentials, no proof of its validity, and has no obvious practical utility whatsoever.

The distinction between the objects of our religious faith—God and His Son and His angels and ministers, on the one hand—and a so-called eternal Reality, unintelligible and wholly unlovable, on the other.

The distinction between the objects of our knowledge (which are real enough to be the very obvious causes of our weal or woe), and the objects of assumed wisdom (which are not real enough to us to merit any name except Eide or Forms or Ideas).

The distinction between the faculties of knowing (whose worth is proved every moment of our lives), and the faculty of super-knowing (whose very existence is a sheer assumption).

The distinction between the philosophy which, not finally perhaps, but with ever-increasing success, systematises our whole knowledge and thought, and a "real" philosophy, which is admittedly useless as a guide in life, and does nothing to co-ordinate the elements of our knowledge.

In every case, there is much more than a distinction drawn. There is also the definite assertion of the existence of a vast gulf between the things distinguished; an assertion, too, of the immeasurable inferiority of the entire group of objects, faculties and states which we know as real and valuable. Add to this degradation a wilful casting out of the details of life which we know as best—home and family, art and the pursuit of art, poetry and the inspiration of poetry, progress and its many-sided culture, effort and achievement in almost every direction—and you have an array of "objectionable elements" which does most emphatically call for explanation.

Now I should be arrogant, indeed, if I imagined that I could, like Socrates in the fifth book of the *Republic*, "breast the huge waves of opposition." The defence is even harder now than it was in Plato's day; for our experience has deeper roots, our common sense rests upon a broader basis of proved facts of life, our science is full-grown and no longer a weakling, our religion has an authority quite unknown to the Greeks. And these, I suppose, are my antagonists—the experience, the common sense, the science and the religion of the modern Western world. Add

to these the careful verdict of learned commentators, the weight of erudition for many generations; and then let the reader judge whether I can hope to defend my position against such odds.

But I will not attempt a formal defence. I have only undertaken in this chapter to examine the grounds of opposition, and so perhaps show cause for questioning their permanent validity. Then, leaving the opposition on one side, I will try, for the benefit of the very few who may share my doubts about the strength of the enemy's position, to harmonise the Platonic teaching, as I see it, with the known needs and good aims of our life in the Western world.

Let me again begin by recalling the story of the public lecture given by Plato in Athens when his reputation had been long established. It was announced that he would lecture upon the Good, and a large audience assembled to hear him. "They thought that they would hear about the accepted human goods which they understood; but they were startled to hear a lecture all about Mathemata and number and geometry and astrology; and so most of that great and varied throng were disappointed and went away." Is it not true that "the great and varied throng" of people of all kinds who have read the *Republic* have come to the study of it with just the same expectations? We all expect to find an intelligible account of what *we* consider good; but, though some may go away disappointed, most of us do actually find the very meaning to which our predilections point us. This is excusable, certainly; for there never was a book of which the Latin couplet is more true:—

"Hic liber est in quo quaerit sua dogmata quisque,
Invenit et pariter dogmata quisque sua."[1]

Now I need not go farther to explain why it is that most of us, including nearly all modern commentators, have adopted the interpretation which holds the field to-day. This alone harmonises with our "generally accepted human goods," with our dominant interests, with the things we chiefly care about, we members of the strenuous, pushing, practical Western world.

[1] "This is a book in which each reader seeks his own opinions; in which each likewise finds opinions which are his own."

We are all politicians, intensely interested in the machinery of welfare, in the building and improving of the shell of social life, its institutions and laws, its paraphernalia of well-being, its concrete, visible structure of appliances for a satisfactory life. No wonder we fasten upon the "politics" of the *Republic*, dwelling, in appreciation or criticism, on the Autocratic Philosopher, on the rigid class system, on the military police and on "the medicinal lying," which is so excellently allowed as a device for hoodwinking the lower orders. We are all social reformers, intensely interested in the outer regulation of other people's lives, in the national provision for their needs, in the devices for the care of health and the improvement of the race. No wonder we fasten upon the social reforms of the *Republic*, harping, with endless discussion, upon the community of goods, the community of pursuits for women and men, the equality of the sexes, and the daring eugenic proposals which defy the marriage tie for the sake of a healthy stock.

We are all scientific people, too, or firm believers in science, with an intense interest and a blind faith in the power of our sciences to produce obvious and measurable increase of our "accepted goods"; to cure our diseases, to lengthen our lives, to enable us to harness nature to the yoke of our desires. No wonder we examine anxiously the sciences about which Plato talks, excusing his primitive ignorance, or—if we cannot bear to criticise him—struggling manfully to show that he really is in line with the methods of modern research.[1]

But these interests of ours are all good, you will say; they are the marks of vigorous, unselfish people who insist upon making the world better than we find it, who refuse to sit with folded hands watching the world go wrong, ourselves and others stagnating in apathy instead of striving onwards with the effort that is life. Why, of course: who would say that they are not good? Who would be so foolish as to rule out the path of pursuit from our lives, when we cannot even begin to live well until we have done our best and achieved our utmost upon it? But you must at least admit—and this is all I claim—that these good

[1] E.g. Bosanquet; who makes the extraordinary remark that the modern discovery of the planet Neptune would have been dear to the heart of Plato. Extraordinary, at least, in connection with the *Republic*, in which we are expressly told that "our astronomy will have nothing to do with the fretted sky, but will leave the visible stars alone."

preoccupations make it very difficult for us to find Plato's meaning. That is all my present point: we will discuss relative values together in a moment.

You will observe, further, that our passionate attachment to progress and civilisation, and to the complexity which is the essence of both, is still a deeper obstacle. For this worship of progressive civilisation leads us to subordinate all activities to that which progress seems to demand. In an extreme form of this worship, society is regarded as a beautiful organism, ever evolving in increasing variety, though without any known goal before it—just trailing through eternity, always to be but never being perfect. Each social member must fit into this evolutionary process in which he has his place, and become what it requires for its increasing differentiation. There cannot, then, be any one single ideal of human perfection: no rigid type for all, no one mould into which all must be run, no Christ-man, with his stark simplicity, which all must become. It takes all sorts of people to make a world, we say; how else shall we get our many-sided, progressive life? How else shall we, each in his own way, find the culture which suits him? How obviously true! But how certainly the obvious truth blinds us to the equally obvious falsehood! Of course it takes all sorts to make the imperfect world we know. But it takes only one sort to make a *good* world, and that sort is the all-good man and woman of whom Plato wrote. Does not the universal ideal of religion—"Be ye therefore as Christ"—mean just this? Never mind your many-sided culture: let that take care of itself. Aim, all of you, at the single but infinite quality of a Christ, the full stature of humanity, and the *good* society will follow as a matter of course—too good for progress to need talking about any more. But, once again, how are we to be expected to find and welcome this message in Plato's writings, so long as we are under the spell of the cultural progress which rightly belongs to the life of the world?

You may urge, however, that many of us are also philosophers. I grant it; but you will observe that even our philosophy is subordinated to the politics and the science and the progress in which we believe. That philosophy—as we understand it—should be so subordinated matters hardly at all. If it is only a keen intellectual exercise, always trying to find truth where it is not to be found, with faculties which cannot touch anything

above the relative and the contradictory, then it is of little consequence that such an exercise should fall into line with scientific method, and anchor its speculations to the relatively firm discoveries of physics, biology and psychology. Only it must be remembered that, in doing so, it abandons its assumed quest—to find *the* truth ; and, just as the man of science can never understand a Swedenborg who asserts that the real use of the senses is to see God, so the votaries of such a philosophy can never understand a Plato who finds that the real use of the intellect is to serve as a handmaid in preparing a different faculty for its upward flight to the Good.

But, finally, may it not be urged that many of us are religious, and therefore ready to find and to value a more profound teaching than science or philosophy can reveal ? I gladly grant it ; but is it not true that just here there has come to be the most fatal subordination, and therefore the greatest obstacle of all ? I mean the very general subordination of religion to politics, to progress, and finally to science, which has made even religious leaders unwilling or unable to recognise the religious message of Plato.

It is very easy, I know, to exaggerate here. But it will hardly be denied that, in quite early times, the pure religion of Christ lost something of its simplicity by being " institutionalised " or " politicised," with the definite establishment of the Church. It became Christianity : men spoke and still speak of conversion to Christianity, even of belief in Christianity—a dreadful substitute, surely, for belief in Christ ; for belief in Christianity has led to inquisitions, but belief in Christ can only lead to love. Nations were labelled Christian, just as they might be labelled parts of the Roman Empire. And Church was combined with State—an ingenious and very sure way of banishing the Sermon on the Mount and all the core of utter unworldliness which is the essence of true religion. It was perhaps not an accident that Aristotle, and not Plato, became the accepted fount of philosophic wisdom for such a Church : how could it have been otherwise ?

But Protestantism restored the loss, some think, bringing back religion to its pure source and its true meaning, making it once more a matter for the individual soul, concerned only with the relation of the soul to God, and so raising it from the degrada-

tion of mixture with a political institution. There was a gain, no doubt, even though clergy have not yet ceased to measure the progress of their "religion" by counting the millions of adherents to Christianity—as if that had anything to do with the number of followers of Christ. But two new dangers have since appeared, whether as a result of Protestantism or not, I do not care to guess. One is the definite exaltation of science; the other, the passion for human progress. It would be perverse and foolish to make much of the latter danger, even though it may sometimes lead to making religion an affair of drains—as the early Christian Socialists were (most unfairly) accused of doing. For, as I will explain later, the care for human progress *in the right place* is so closely bound up with the practice of true religion that there is not very much to be feared from a closer linking of the two. The only danger lies in the fact that we are inclined to identify *all* religion with the good conduct of the lower path (with *its* Dharma or religion), and so forget that every individual soul has its own upper path to tread—alone. For even in the modern world it is not true to say that, though we may seek God in the desert, the God we find must be the God of the city. Now, as at all times, the God we find will be *our* God, of solitude and city alike.

But the other danger, arising from the exaltation of science, has proved to be more real and much more insidious. When science became really formidable, as an authoritative guide of thought and belief, and therefore an apparent foe to religion, religious leaders made the tragic blunder of opposing it on its own ground—that of the lower path. One cannot help thinking that the blunder was made because the religious leaders had not fully understood what a gulf separates the province of Nous, the faculty which can see God in the spiritual world, and the province of intellect, the faculty which can see order and causation among phenomena. They did not perceive that they were descending into the cave to fight—unnecessarily—a hopeless battle; they seem to have been unconscious that they were making any such descent, perhaps because they were chiefly interested in the lower form of religion, or that which depends upon evidences and rational arguments, upon appeals to historical documents, upon proofs of signs and wonders, and upon all the other paltry props of our inferior faith which has in it so little

of absolute certainty as to be shaken to its foundations if its own little pegs are touched. And so the priests of the middle of the nineteenth century set to work to "disprove" the new science—not seeing that it would have been just about as relevant to try to disprove a new planet.

A succeeding generation of leaders, recognising the futility of this attack, changed its attitude, though not its ground, and opened its arms to science, only stipulating that, if any very startling discovery were made, such as the possible manufacture of "life" by chemists' ingenuity, it should be allowed to harmonise it decently with its necessary religious beliefs. But this attitude also involves the subordination of the religious faculty to the intellectual, in other words, the degradation of religion to the level of science; for the only harmony possible is that of one set of intellectual conceptions with another set; and the attempt to make religion scientific cannot achieve more than a reconciliation, to changing views of the phenomenal universe, of changing mental concepts of God's purpose in that universe. But spiritual truth neither asks for nor needs any such reconciliation. It cannot be in opposition: lines lying in different planes never meet at all.[1]

An odd result has followed the unnecessary fear and equally unnecessary respect for modern science on the part of religious teachers. In the nineteenth century the chief reproach of Christianity did not arise from the badness of its "bad specimens" so much as from the excellence of numerous people who lived exemplary lives but disclaimed all profession of religious belief. They frankly preferred science to its very impotent adversary. In the present century, the reproach seems likely to arise from the fact that a Christian Church, which is now trying to be scientific (in a narrow sense) repels numerous good people

[1] I do not mean that our faith ought to be without intellectual concepts, nor, if it must have them, that it should allow them to be as absurd as we please. I simply mean that the intellectual concepts are not any essential part of the faith, but only a changing dress in which we may try to present the reality of our faith to our own or others' intellects. And, as an illustration of the different planes, consider the unnecessary flutter of excitement among religious people when a scientific man announces the possibility of making living protoplasm out of dead matter in the laboratory. It obviously does not matter two straws whether or not we discover how God (or nature) "creates" life, in lower or higher forms; it is no more important to religion than the discovery of how He sends the rain or makes a plant grow. It only matters if we mistake the knowledge for *understanding* of life—or of God.

who have discovered for themselves that truth lies far deeper than modern science or the scientific intelligence can reach; who, instead of dropping a belief in miracles, as unscientific, have discovered that what is really true is always miraculous and often unintelligible to reason; and who are actually kept out of the fold, not because they believe too little, but because they are ready to believe too much; not because they find religion opposed to reason, but because they find it pretending to be rational. And meanwhile, some of the leaders of the Christian religion, steering a middle course between religion and science, tend to become—like all who compromise between the spiritual and the earthly—themselves the greatest sceptics in regard to the greatest spiritual truths. This is why, even among the exponents of religion, there are so few who are prepared to recognise in Plato an explicit champion of the "philosophical" foundation of religious truth. Some of the early Christians hailed him as "the Moses of the Greeks." St. Augustine was glad to declare that he found Christ insinuated in every page of his writings. Very different is the estimate formed by the priestly commentators of later days. Jowett—Churchman and cleric—hardly finds in the *Republic* a profounder meaning than did the rationalist Grote. Bussell—Churchman and cleric too—traces the influence of Eastern thought in Plato's myths, only to find that this explains his pessimism. Adams comments on some of his profoundest utterances—by excusing the childishness of his blunders. The Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford can see nothing more in the ecstasy of Plotinus (and, by implication, in the ecstasy of Plato's Philosopher) than "a phenomenon deserving attention by the physiologist as well as by the psychologist."

Another different explanation of our narrow interpretation of the *Republic* is to be found in the fact that most of us are educated in complete ignorance of antiquity. At our Universities we are taught in effect that Greece and Rome *were* the ancient world, or, at any rate, that they represented the high-water mark of thought and speculation among the ancients. The wisdom of the East is a sealed book to us; Sanskrit is not studied, nor any other Eastern language, as part of a classical education. In our elaborate study of Greece and Rome we gather (e.g. from Herodotus) that there were some very cranky

people in Egypt, such as the priests of Memphis, who professed to know secrets which even some of the clever Greeks were curious to learn; we gather also that there were "mysteries," such as those of Eleusis, in which a hidden doctrine was supposed to be veiled. But all these were the delusions or the make-believe of children; and, in any case, the most sensible of the clever children of the old world were the intelligent Greeks and the capable Romans, who devised constitutions, learned how to fight and organise, wrote plays and histories and made the fine beginnings of sensible speculation in politics, ethics, logic and metaphysics. Of course these speculations must not be taken too seriously: they were only beginnings, such as one would expect from the youth of mankind. But at least they were sane. And, as Plato is the most charming of all the speculators, we certainly will insist upon treating him as sane too. He shall not be regarded as one of the cranks, of whom our knowledge is vague, but quite enough to show that they were very fantastic and deluded people.

Now I am *not* exaggerating this narrow point of view inevitably produced by our accepted modern education. If proof were needed, it would only be necessary to ask how many of our University graduates, who are quite familiar with Aristotle's Logic and Ethics, have any knowledge at all of the philosophy of the Chinese or of the Hindus or of the Persians; or how many of our educated clergy have even read a translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*, that wonderfully beautiful summary of the religious philosophy of Hinduism. And the worst result of our ignorance is that it vitiates our estimates and distorts our perspective in regard to the most important issues in life. Books are continually written, and innumerable sermons are preached, which unintentionally mislead us concerning the things that matter most, because the writers and the preachers have no inkling of the vast background of profound speculation and life-giving revelation which lies behind our familiar "classical" authorities.[1] And the greatest error creeps in with reference to Greek

[1] With reference to Plato, witness the preposterous but quite typical assertion by Grote that "Plato was the first to introduce into ethical speculation the theory that the just mind blesses the possessor of itself"; and in reference to modern thought generally, witness the general belief in the newness of the doctrine of pragmatism—a doctrine which was fully worked out, named, and put in its right place, at least two thousand years before Bergson wrote or William James popularised his teaching.

thought, for this so obviously holds in solution two different elements, the one really new and original, representing the early effort of the mind of Western civilisation to grapple with the difficulties of rational speculation and scientific method; the other very old, an inheritance from the ancient East, which had filtered through and had become the possession of a few minds only, but in those minds had produced a profound result, and emerged in the form of a transcendental philosophy, totally different from the original but very limited speculations of the native genius of Greece. The mind of Plato seems to have combined, as no other mind did, both these elements. Side by side with the flashes of purely Greek thought, expressive of new analysis of intellectual concepts in politics and ethics and metaphysics, there shines out also the reflection of the ancient wisdom, with its mature and settled view of a spiritual universe explaining adequately and at all points the phenomenal universe and man's place in it; with its elaborate philosophy, also, the outcome of hundreds of generations of acute thinkers applying minds no less subtle than those of the Greeks to the eternal problems of life and knowledge and reality—but, unlike the Greeks, always with the "spiritual idea" deeply rooted in their thought.

But, indeed, most of the obstacles I have mentioned are the outcome of something much deeper. We in the West have taken it for our task to make *good* the Path of Pursuit. Whether the task is self-chosen or is forced upon us for our contribution to the evolution of humanity, Heaven only knows. But it is a fine task, even though it brings with it peculiar danger and loss. We may say, therefore, that it is not merely an accident that our religion has largely[1] lost the distinction between the way of the world and the way of the spirit: that a religion of works, and of faith expressed in works, is the true religion in our eyes: that human progress seems very real, and real too its ministers, science and invention—far more real than the

[1] I say "largely," for I am speaking only of the present day, and chiefly of the Protestant Churches. There is little doubt that in mediæval times it was definitely recognised that two distinct orders had been instituted by God, the one spiritual, to guide men to spiritual life, the other temporal, to conduct the affairs of the world, the latter necessary because of the innate turbulence of human nature, but only representing the sword of temporal power which St. Peter was commanded to put back into its sheath, and not use at all as a disciple. The distinction is still recognised in a large part of the Christian Church, though not, I imagine, by most Protestants.

mystic's progress towards an intangible beatitude of soul to the neglect of all earthly goods: that our creed has dropped reincarnation out of its content, and made heresies of many a belief whose sole fault was its tendency to lessen the importance of this present life: that Plato was forgotten, while Aristotle was exalted: that the youthful "antiquity" of practical Western nations has been studied, and the far older "antiquity" of the East neglected. May we not see in all this the working of the selective instinct of the Western temperament, unceasingly forcing us to concentrate all our attention upon those things alone which will help us to deal shrewdly and act strenuously and judge practically in all that belongs to the path of pursuing and achieving results?

It is not accident; but the loss is as real as the gain. We have turned outwards to find both truth and happiness, although our religion tells us plainly that they can only be found within. In a sense, therefore, we have lost the secret of religion, because our chosen mission in the world blinds us to it. It is not that we are ignorant of the secret: it is written large in all the teachings of our divine guide. But we simply cannot face the Sermon on the Mount, with all its paradoxical exaltation of the meek and lowly, the persecuted and suffering—the *failures* in the worldly life. So we interpret it all compromisingly, trying hard to make it fit in with our hot pursuit of laudable successes. We will turn the other cheek—when we are convinced that our proper pride and dignity will not be imperilled; we will give to him that asketh—when careful investigation has proved that he is more worthy to receive than we to keep; we will resign all earthly goods—when we are quite persuaded that our right position in society does not require us to have them; we will take no thought for the morrow—when we are entirely certain that somebody else is taking adequate thought for us; we will believe in the moral of the camel and the needle's eye—when we have discovered a microscopically small camel and a monstrously large needle.

This is a libel on many Christians, you say. No doubt it is. But it is true of most of us, quite inevitably true. Here and there a little sect or group may tear itself away from the general materialising of the spirit: but not often for long. The Quakers tried to take the mandate of non-resistance literally; but they

soon found that, though they could refuse to draw a sword to get the better of an enemy, they could not refrain from drawing a cheque to get the better of a business competitor. And when I say it is inevitable, I simply mean that it cannot be otherwise so long as we are compelled to live the life of the world, so long as the very condition of our living an active life at all is that we shall do our best to compete in the cave for the rewards which belong to the cave.

Then there is no way of escape? That is just what there is: and it is Plato's way, the Eastern way, religion's way everywhere and at all times. But there is no escape from a materialised religion if we close the door to the upper path, or try to compromise it with the lower. That is our final error. We see that the active strenuous life is good: so it is. We see that its lasting achievements and successes are worthy of our efforts: so they are. But we do not see that such life and such achievement are not the whole of good, not the best, but only the beginning; we forget that, in the progress of the soul, the road turns round upon itself when the middle of the ascent is reached; and that at some point in every life a new form of effort with a new goal before it must supplant the effort and aim that went before. The spiritual life must take the place of the worldly, the inner activity of the outer; the path of liberation must add the coping-stone to the good achievements of the path of pursuit. Both paths are good, though in very different degree; both are necessary, though at different stages of life; both form part of the full Dharma of the soul, though they cannot be combined. First the life of strenuous pursuit of manifold ends, with its struggles, its competitions, its ambitions, its achievements, all made orderly and good so far as the conditions of human life allow; then—and only then—the life of "freedom from the dust of deeds," disinterested, dispassionate, dissociated from ambition, free from the prickings of desire, the life of the meek and lowly in spirit for whom all the paradoxical conditions of beatitude have become the natural conditions of the only possible good.

But we have confused it all. We preach salvation to children who have all the worldly path before them; while our old men and women refuse to grow old gladly, and insist upon playing the worldly game, like schoolboys and schoolgirls, to the very

end. We make young men into priests at an age when, with all others who have just left boyhood, they ought to be (and usually are) filled with the world's interests and aims, enamoured of its estimates (its right estimates, for it), keen on its pursuits. And we make the priesthood a " profession " like any other worldly profession, only veiling the fact by paying it less than most.

Is not our thought confounded, too, by the same confusion? We are all at sea when we try to define the place of religion in our life. Is war religious? Can business be? The answers should be clear enough, as to a Plato they were. Call fighting a religious duty, by all means; but remember that its god is the god of war, whose names are fortitude and self-denial. Refuse, by all means, to divorce religion from business and administration; but remember that their gods are the gods of human endeavour, whose names are honesty, energy and care for others. They are all true gods; but they are not God. Devotion to them is religious; but it is not Religion—not the Religion which Krishna and Christ came to earth to reveal, and Socrates and St. Paul lived and died to teach. Devotion to them is religious; but it is the Dharma—the righteousness and the religion—of the lower path, or of human life at its best. It is not the Dharma of the free soul. Did you not notice how, in the *Republic*, Plato has much to say, in the preparatory books, about religion as we think of it, about God and His attributes and our duty to imitate Him; but there is no mention of this in the deeper part of the book, no talk of the God of human duty, but only of a " miraculously superior " Good? And how, in his other writings where —as in the *Laws*—he keeps to the familiar level of our human interests, there is no mention at all of the Good, but much reference to the forms of religious observance which we all understand? This is all in keeping with his firm distinction, which I have tried to express by saying boldly that there is not one religion, but two, a lower and a higher; and the lower—all-good though it is for the stage of human endeavour—is but a reflected form of the higher.

I suppose some label-loving readers will imagine that all this is intended as a plea for the reintroduction of mysticism, of which they have heard enough to suspect that it is a very dangerous substitute for sound morality and robust faith in a personal

God. But I hold no brief for mysticism, as usually misunderstood. If I am pleading for anything, besides a deeper interpretation of Plato, it is for a little more attention to religion as he understood it, the religion whose universal mark is its antagonism to our worldly standards of value. Plato was a mystic, of course ; but it is necessary to remember that he was a *pure* mystic, by which I mean that there is nothing mysterious in his teaching : it is merely difficult to grasp because it is so alien to our ordinary conception of " generally accepted goods." In that sense all true religion is mystical. And it is worth while guarding against a danger here. There are many people who are strongly attracted by the idea of a mysticism veiling profound truths which can be revealed only to the select few. It is pleasant to think that one is being admitted into an inner ring, a fellowship of initiates, to whom alone the most secret doctrines are laid bare. My interpretation of Plato may seem to them too obvious and open. Now I do not deny that there *are* hidden secrets which are revealed only to the few who have prepared themselves carefully to understand and use the knowledge and power so gained. But I *do* deny that the truth which is necessary to our salvation is ever hidden at all, except in the sense that all profound truth is hidden from those who are not ready for it. But all such truth is everywhere, and always patent : it is *we* who are veiled or blind, and see it only when our souls are turned round and our ears and eyes opened. Or, to put it in another way, let us say that there is nothing occult or mysterious about the spiritual purpose of the universe : it is only its mechanism and mode of working which are mysterious, and a knowledge of these is not necessary or even useful for salvation. Yet we are always hankering after revelations : we think we could be so much better and do so much more if only a sign were given and an obvious illumination vouchsafed to us. But we have got all revelation within our reach ; the light is everywhere, on everything ; it is only we who are dark. We fail to see that we must *grow* to knowledge and light ; must purify ourselves from the scales of darkness, and so make our own revelation, win the sign we want, light our own torch of illumination.

Does this conflict with the doctrine of mysteries ? I neither know nor care. There have certainly been, at all times, elaborate concealments of truth, by men from men, by good men from

other men ; a belief, too, in the principle of not throwing pearls before swine. And—far more important—inspired teachers have taught in secret part of their message to men. But I think the secrecy has only been that of a small circle of chosen disciples, not a closed circle of initiates ; and all who are ready may and do enter the circle. Clearly there is no need to be mysterious. You may shout the truth from the housetops : none will hear it, except those who have ready ears to hear. You may shovel out pearls before the noses of swine : they will neither smell nor see them until they are no longer swine. We imagine that something may be seen or heard which will mislead or endanger the uninstructed soul. Certainly the truth proclaimed may be distorted into error by the crooked ears of unready listeners ; but that happens to every proclamation, of man or God or devil ; and the falsehood which the crooked soul makes or takes is not lessened by shutting close the truth, and leaving error alone at large.

Plato, at any rate, pure mystic though he is, makes no mystery about the highest truths. All that can be explained in words, he explains as clearly as words allow. If his meaning is obscure, it is for two reasons only : the summit of truth cannot be shown to us Glaucons and Adeimantuses of the world, for we have not the eyes to see it ; " I would gladly lead you farther, but you could not follow me now " ; and the truth of intuition cannot be expressed in the language of rational concepts : " we need new terms," we need a spiritual vocabulary, which we in the West have never had.

But enough of the obstacles which hinder us from understanding the spiritual teaching of the *Republic*. What of the teaching itself—its value, or even its reasonableness, as compared with the best Christian beliefs ? To begin with, I do not admit that there is any essential difference ; but I had better emphasise the word " essential " here, lest I shock good people by seeming to say that Plato taught all that Christ taught. Let me say boldly, however, that, just as all pure mystics are brothers, all the world over, so all religion is one—in its central message. To ask—Is the Christian religion true ? Is the Hindu religion true ?—is like asking—Is European truth true ? Is Indian truth true ? There *is* no Christian religion : there *is* no Hindu religion. There are only several versions of Christ's

truth; there are only several versions of Krishna's truth. And all of these are partial and clouded aspects of the full truth revealed by Christ and by Krishna. Religion is just knowing God. What we take for religion is often no more than a nodding acquaintance with Him. Think of yourself: many people know you a little—one-sidedly and very partially; your acquaintances know each one aspect, probably a very trivial and external aspect; your friends know more of you; and your intimates know you still better, and in many aspects; but the "truth" of you is not really known to any of them. *You* know yourself very differently. Is not this just how God is known? But—and this is religion's real secret—God can be known by you or by me, not merely as you know yourself and as I know myself, but far more fully and completely. That is how religious people know God; and the revelation of that knowledge, and of the way to it, is religion, at all times and in all places. It cannot matter in the least whether a man draws his inspiration from the way of the Cross of Christ or the Eightfold Path of Buddha or the way of realisation of Vedanta. The one thing needful is that he shall understand that nothing short of a Calvary, a desert, or a wilderness, is the beginning of the way, by each of which his *self* is crucified or starved to death or lost never to be found again; and that the way itself is a dying daily to the world and the flesh—not to the bad world and the bad flesh only, but to the good world and the good flesh too. That is why the way is so narrow, and so cold. So lonely, also; since none can go abreast of others, but each must tread alone his path to his God. Well, if anything is clear in Plato's writings, it is his intense belief in this "gospel," and his uncompromising statement of it. So much so, that all we worldly people are repelled by it, and even refuse to recognise it; or, when we cannot help seeing it, complain piteously, with Grote, that he banishes all the elegances and amenities of life, and leaves us only the bare skeleton.

But every statement of the gospel differs from every other statement, in emphasis at least; and the Eastern or Platonic statement must seem to the Christian West to contain many elements which are both strange and wrong. In the first place, it seems to present us with a purely aristocratic form of religion intended only for the few, and those not the poor and needy

who are exposed to life's hardest trials, nor for the young who are beset with strong temptations, but only for the leisured, the elderly, the controlled. It is an intellectual religion, too : there is in it no salvation for the ignorant and foolish, nor for those who have no time to cultivate dialectic or train their minds in the slow lessons of discrimination. It is icily cold, moreover : in its passionlessness there is no room for love, for faith, for the glow of devotion to a personal God or Saviour, even for prayer. And it is a very dangerous religion ; for the life of contemplation which it exalts may become for many people a form of indolent apathy, of subtle self-indulgence wearing the mask of virtue.

Every count in this indictment has some validity, though not as much as we are inclined to think : hardly any, indeed, as applied to the Vedanta of Hinduism, a little more as applied to Plato's doctrine. There is certainly a tinge of aristocratic prejudice in all the religion of the East. It meets us in the orthodox Hindu belief that full salvation is only for the twice-born, not for the lowest castes ; it meets us even more markedly in Plato's concentration of attention upon the " golden caste " of Guardians in his State. But the Hindu orthodoxy is only the distorted form into which human prejudice has twisted a profound spiritual truth. Salvation *is* only (as Christians admit) for those who have been " born again " and have attained the condition of little children in spirit, free from the preoccupations and cares of the full life in the world. But this condition cannot be reached—so the Indian doctrine asserts—until experience has taught its lessons ; for only experience can dissolve for us the absorption in the world which the young ought to feel, and which the poor and needy cannot help feeling so long as they are forced to devote nearly all their time and strength and thought to the task of obtaining a bare livelihood. According to the Indian conception, full salvation (which means so much more than going to heaven when we die) cannot be won except by those souls which have reached the condition typified by the true Brahman—exactly resembling the true Guardian whose way of life Plato describes. This condition, with all its necessary experience behind it, is only attained after many incarnations into human life ; and the soul which has nearly reached it will, naturally and in all normal cases, incarnate in the Brahman or golden caste for its final life on earth. At the same time,

both the Indian and the Platonic doctrine allow for the exceptional appearance of true golden natures in a lower caste; and in the parables of Hinduism few things are more striking than the constant reference to examples of the very highest religious life manifested in members of the very lowest castes. Witness the often-told story of the pious Brahman sent to learn the secret of religion from the life of an outcast and untouchable butcher. In practice, every religion shows a tendency to become aristocratic, or rather oligarchic—even in an English Church; but that is only part of the human distortion which every religion suffers, and from which it has to be delivered by frequent upheavals and new movements. It must be remembered, moreover, that in India all castes and rules of caste are wiped out as soon as the spiritual life is embraced. The Sannyasin renounces caste when he renounces the world; the Yogi is above and beyond caste. And the fullest religious teaching is open to all: all may sit at a Yogi's feet, even as—according to the ancient rule, at least—all may in youth enter the Brahman's house for teaching.

But this does not bring religion within the reach of those to whom poverty is both a preoccupation and an obsession. Let us grant it. But is religion in any existing society free from this defect? It is part of the truth which gives its sting to the bitter old saying of the Greek cynic—"Let a man first obtain a competence, and then practise virtue." But the religion of Hinduism, at any rate, can face this reproach as well as any other; for in it every form of religious life is offered, for every temperament and every condition of work or wealth.[1] There is some path of salvation within the reach of all; and each path is all-sufficient and all-good.

But here we touch upon the second count in the indictment—the super-intellectual form of the Vedanta religion, by which it is put quite out of the reach of the ignorant and foolish, as well as of the hard-working poor. Now it is perfectly clear that no one can become the true Philosopher described by Plato unless he or she has leisure enough to give up most of life to the task, to "leave all and follow" the truth. But it is also per-

[1] I do not refer to the "lower forms" of religion in which Hinduism abounds. These forms of the reflections of religion are a necessary accident of the adaptation of religion to worldly life, and are found, in greater or less abundance, in all countries at all times. I am dealing here only with the paths of true religion, as explained.

fectly clear that Plato does not want to adapt his " best of all possible lives " to anything worldly: he has chosen, in the *Republic*, to picture the life of the absolute devotee, who literally does leave all to follow truth. We can no more expect him to reconcile it with the needs of the wage-earner or man of business than we can ask any celibate religious order to adapt its way of living to the needs of a householder. Further, Plato is concerned solely with the religious path of wisdom or Gnana; and that, too, in its most intellectualised form. But, as I have more than once pointed out, Vedanta recognises two other paths—the Karma Yoga, or path of work, and the Bhakti Yoga, or path of devotion. Now in both of these the essentials are, indeed, the same as in Gnana Yoga; both must begin with disinterestedness and dispassion, and end with full discrimination between what really matters and what really does not matter. But the methods are totally different. Karma Yoga is all activity: ceaseless action for the good of others, never for oneself; but with no care about successful results of any action. The one rule is—Do all you can, and leave the rest to God. Bhakti Yoga is all devotion: it is worship at its best; that is, the unceasing expression of wholly selfless devotion to God. The path of activity is for those who can serve better than they can think or meditate, and who must give of their service if they are to realise their spiritual brotherhood with all men. The path of devotion is for those who must pour out their love to a personal Saviour, and worship God as the Father and Mother and Child. One of the great incarnations of the Godhead was that of Krishna, the Christ-child who never grew up, an incarnation of love, appealing to the childlike and simple souls who can be saved only if their faith is merged in love. To us, these two paths are intelligible: they express two sides of the Christian ideal which we all understand. The disinterestedness of Karma Yoga may be very foreign to our practice, and very repugnant to us as a constant condition of our activities; but at least we do lip-service to the principle of sweeping a room only to the praise of God, and so making " it and the action clean."[1] And

[1] The well-known and rather horrid little verse about the pious servant girl and her task at least embodies the true principle of work-worship. It is horrid only because it misapplies the principle so hopelessly. For the full gospel of work is not to be offered (either as a sop of consolation or as an inducement to be contented with an unsatisfactory lot) to drudges who are not, will not be,

the devotion of Bhakti is and always has been the central Christian ideal. Further, it is part of our generally accepted belief that both these paths are open to the poorest and most menial citizens everywhere. I suppose it is an ideal of a Salvation Army at its best to present them in combination for the religious life of even the outcasts of society. For they are compatible with the hardest life and the lowest position : they do not require anyone to turn his back upon the world of work or the world of care : they only demand a new heart and a new spirit, changing everything indeed, yet leaving the forms of all activity unchanged.

So far, then, we cannot accuse the Vedanta religion as a whole of neglecting the poor and needy. At the same time, there is always this deep difference between the Vedanta view and the general conception of religion in the West. According to the former, religion is such a tremendous thing that it cannot be really followed along any path until the dust of preoccupation with the world has been shaken off. Before that, preparation alone is possible, nothing more. The true Karma Yogin and the true Bhakti Yogin are " out of the world," not in it, just as the Gnana Yogin must be. Ordinary life is never more than a preparatory stage : you must leave it to find your freedom ; then, if you like, return as a Karma Yogin, to work for the world, as a Bhakta, to pray for it, as a Gnani, to enlighten it. But according to our popular conceptions, no such separation is necessary : the gulf between the life of the world and the life not of the world is recognised only by religious orders following an old rule of life : the great mass of Christians have decided, for the present at all events, that religion shall be both for the world and in the world. And this difference makes the final doctrine of Vedanta peculiarly difficult. The intelligible paths

and should not be satisfied with doing menial duties all their lives. It is meant, like every full gospel, for those who have passed through the variety of interests which make normal satisfactory life, and are fit to " return to simplicity " in work as in everything else. It is meant, in fact, for the Karma Yogin, or for the true philosopher doing gladly any work that comes to hand, however menial or dull. He alone can do it all " but for the praise of God," with no other interest in his heart. To the servant girl, continual room-sweeping is a task to be done, a discipline to be gone through, like most regular monotonous work. Her motive ought to be to make the room thoroughly clean : to do the work properly because it *is* her task ; and if she hopes all the time that, by doing it well, she will get better and more important work to do, so much the better. Room-sweeping is *not* a fine life's work for any normal woman or man ; but it would be a perfectly satisfactory life's work for a " true philosopher."

of work and devotion must both end in the wisdom of perfect discrimination. To this they lead: this is their coping-stone: this wisdom is the highest state of religion. So, after all, Gnana or the path of knowledge is supreme; it is really the royal path, the direct road to the Good, as Plato saw. And Gnana is *not* a gospel for the poor or the ignorant—if (as Plato would have denied) we intend always to have the poor with us, in the sense of men and women who are debarred from getting or enjoying the minimum of satisfactions which every human being ought to have, and always to have the ignorant with us, in the sense of men and women who are debarred from obtaining the minimum of education of faculties and leisure to use them which every human being ought to obtain.

Now Plato is an exponent of the Gnana or Wisdom path, and of that alone. And because his religion wears an intellectual dress, is, in fact, presented as an affair of elaborate intellectual exercise from beginning to end, we find it unintelligible, irritating, and quite out of relation to what we mean by religion or even morality. His first principle in ethics is the Socratic principle that virtue is knowledge, with its corollary that vice is ignorance. The *Republic* shows what he really means; but we, missing the meaning, feel vaguely insulted and directly baffled by the doctrine. We know that we are sinners: we will not admit that we are therefore fools. We prefer to think that our vices are wilful, and due to the great strength of our desires and passions: there is something fine about that, even though for the moment it means defying God. The Platonic doctrine not only belittles us, but even seems to put our goodness and badness outside the range of our will altogether. It makes them dependent upon causes beyond our control, upon our inherited mental abilities and our given opportunities for mental culture. In other words, it makes wickedness the result of the accident of being born rather stupid, and it makes righteousness the result of the accident of being a superior person. Yet to Plato the doctrine is plainly vital, for desire *is* ignorance, while to be virtuous is to *know*, that is, to possess absolutely binding knowledge of the real values of all things, or to be a master of moral dialectic. And in this way alone he unites morality with religion. For in religion his first principle is the famous maxim of Solon, "Know thyself," which the *Republic* also explains. But again

we miss the meaning; and if the ethical principle insulted us, we feel that the religious principle insults God. We, turning outwards, would fain get away from our imperfect selves, and find God anywhere else—in His heaven or in His universe. But, once more, to Plato the principle of "inward turning" is vital; vital, too, the difficult process of the search within. For in the individual soul alone is to be found the guide to God, the faculty which is itself divine and the revealer of divinity to man.

Finally, the knowledge which is at once the sole foundation of righteousness and the sole condition of religious life, is not an accidental boon outside the scope of our willing, vouchsafed only to the lucky few endowed with superior minds. It is within the reach of all—though not within our immediate reach. The road *is* long and hard: few can jump to God in a single lifetime; but the road is open to all who will to be pure in heart. The faculty of real knowing—Nous or Spirit or Atman—is the same in all. Intellectual ability is not the saving grace; but rather moral capacity for the "dialectic" to which intellectual ability is, more often than not, the foe. Plato has not made this clear. He might perhaps have endorsed the hard saying of one of the old Upanishads: "Those who follow Avidya (false knowledge or ignorance) enter into the region of darkness; but they enter into a still darker region who follow Vidya (knowledge as the world understands it)." Certainly his contempt for the clever people of the cave of our world, his persistent degradation of the learning and the science which we exalt, his almost wearisome insistence upon the stark simplicity of interests in which true philosophy starts—all these bring him near to the doctrine that truth is revealed to babes and sucklings and hidden from the learned, that it is to the wise foolishness and to the intelligent Greeks a stumbling-block. But, with the seventh book of the *Republic* in our minds, it would be paradoxical to assert that Plato holds the door of his Wisdom pathway open to any stupid but willing seeker. He narrows down the entrance until it excludes all who have not at the least a very good memory and a remarkable capacity for sustained though; and by doing so he limits very emphatically the application of his gospel. Is he wrong? Let wiser people answer. I am content to fall back upon the old assurance: "Even a very little Gnana will save a man; for the beginnings of wisdom are never

lost, the mustard seed of understanding never dies, but grows from life to life till the tree of knowledge fills the soul, and ignorance has no more room to live."

The third count in the indictment brings us back to more familiar ground. I have no intention of denying that there is, in the philosophic life, a loneliness and a coldness which must at first repel us. That must be so, if—as Vedantins assert—religion is always an intensely individual matter. But the fault lies in us, not in the religious life; the kingdom of heaven must always seem chilly to us citizens of the world who have no inkling of what communion with God really means. Yet even the religious people of the West will complain that Plato makes the good life unnecessarily cold by refusing to admit the four great sources of warmth—faith and devotion and prayer and worship. Faith he hardly mentions, except to degrade it. It is a poor thing: right opinion, at its best. It belongs to the lower line of faculties and their objects, to the "doxical" group of quasi-realities. What he means is that faith is a poor thing by comparison with knowledge: who would be content to believe when he might really know? And it gives an uncertain anchorage: like everything dependent upon doxa or dogma, it may endure for a time, but will surely change at last. Is he wrong about much that passes by the name of faith? The history of many an individual life, the history of many ages of Christianity or of any other religion, above all the history of our own age, all prove that he is right. There *is* no sure anchorage except in the direct knowledge of God which transcends belief. But, if by faith we mean something deeper, if we mean the continual spiritual vibration of our whole being in response to the spiritual outpouring which comes from God, then Plato does recognise it, for it is the cause of the harmony which the righteous soul finds and never loses.

And in its simpler form, he recognises it too. It is the sheet-anchor of the "good state" which is preparatory to the perfect path. The young citizen-soul learns—in faith—to attach himself to the given forms of good whose reality he will some day know. It is his early faith alone which prepares him for the final recognition of the Good when at last he finds it. So, too, the disciple is led on by faith. He cannot *know*—until the end; but, like Glaucon and Adeimantus, and like Plato himself, he

believes that there is a very different account to be given of the Good from the one which the world gives ; he believes in a divinity far surpassing the God imperfectly revealed even in his scriptures ; he believes so intensely that " nothing else can profit a man " except to find this divinity that he is willing to sacrifice everything to the quest. Is not this faith ? His very courage is expressly described as a sort of faith—as, indeed, it is. And finally, to make the fact more plain, Plato tells us definitely that the whole of the " good and true state " (the right condition of living which disciples must adopt) is based upon faith—upon belief in the wisdom of the great Legislator " whose ordinances are to be kept inviolate." But, when the Royal Path is reached, faith fades into insignificance before the light of true knowledge. It is not mentioned any more, except as something inferior which must be outgrown, something which must and will be far transcended when the Kingly state is attained. And, because of this, we turn round upon Plato and complain that he fails to realise the importance of faith—exactly as we complain that he fails to realise the value of art just because he banishes the pursuit of it from the highest stage of the soul's progress lest it should distract it from concentration upon the Good.

A similar explanation, I think, accounts for the omission—unintelligible, at first, to many of us—of the other essential elements of religious life and feeling. It has been asserted that Plato's religion falls short of the Christian revelation chiefly because it lacks the revelation of God as love : because " his highest good is Justice and not Love " ; and therefore his doctrine " leaves us at the last strangely cold. We do not want to live in his Ideal State : it would be dull and mechanical. We do want to feel the emotions of pity and tenderness which he regards as weakness. His absolute morality is in the end repellent, because the revelation which alone can give it attractive force had not yet been granted to men."[1] Putting aside

[1] Rev. W. Temple, *Plato and Christianity*, Chapter III. I cannot help thinking that Mr. Temple's sympathetic criticism is vitiated throughout by three things. First, he looks for Plato's religious teaching only in the more elementary and popular books of the *Republic*, which contain simple and quite intelligible discussions about the nature of the personal God and the immortality of the soul. It does not occur to him that Plato's real religious teaching is not here at all, but in the sixth and seventh books, in which God and immortality are hardly mentioned, and in which the whole discussion is very far removed from our " accepted human goods." Indeed, Mr. Temple appears to be unable to see anything in the " philosophic " training described in these books except a kind of

the various misunderstandings of Plato's meaning which this passage contains, let us admit that it does very accurately express what we all feel—at first—in reference to his apparent failure to find a place for love, or for its reflections—pity and tenderness and devotion. The omission jars upon us very much as his strange condemnation of the artistic worship of the beautiful jars upon us. It is all so unlike Plato as we know him, the Plato who could both feel and express the exquisite pathos of the *Phædo*, the Plato who was himself poet and lover, the Plato whose devotion to Socrates was the ruling motive of his life, the Plato who elsewhere identifies beauty with the supreme good. Yet in his masterpiece, in his most elaborate and careful exposition of his doctrine, all this seems to be forgotten and contradicted. No wonder his Christian admirer and critic falls back upon the notion that "his theory falls short of his intuition" or instinctive feeling, and lags behind the truth which his heart tells him is right. But this is the exact reverse of the fact. It is not his theory which lags behind his intuition, but our understanding which lags behind his theory. It is not the case that his doctrine falls short of his instinctive feelings: it passes far beyond his or anyone else's feelings. With his eyes wide open, with full knowledge of what he is doing—and its terrific cost—he points his and our souls to the narrow path whose strait gate shuts out *everything* we prize and cling to, even love and pity and beauty as we now feel them. *He* knew what the loss meant, far better than most of us. What are his words, when he passes the sentence of banishment upon poetry

rather contemptible "self-culture." In the second place, he seems to be entirely unconscious of the fact that, before Plato wrote and before Christ came, there had been revelations of God as the God of love and tenderness, in which these aspects of the divine nature were emphasised quite as completely as in the Christian revelation. If he had known anything of the true Krishna worship of India, if he had ever talked with a fervent Vaishnava, or Hindu follower of the path of love, he could not have made the wild assertion which he does make about the impossibility of anyone in Plato's day realising to the full that God is mercy and love and tenderness as well as justice. I suppose a devout Christian is bound to regard the revelation of Christ as unique. That is right enough, for every true revelation is unique, not in time and place merely, but in its deepest meaning. But the Christian, who has every right to call it a perfect revelation of God's love, certainly cannot, without gross ignorance, call it the first or only revelation of that love.

In the third place—though this is a smaller matter—Mr. Temple, like other commentators, unconsciously limits his appreciation of Plato's meaning by using the word "justice" throughout as the translation of the Dikaiosune or Righteousness which the *Republic* describes. And, as the passage quoted shows, he makes full use of the implications of that hard and narrow word.

and all that poetry stands for as the expression of tenderness and noble feeling? "Always from my earliest youth have I felt a reverence and love of Homer, which even now makes the words falter on my lips." But he knew too—as we do not—that the final path, the Solar path, the Royal Road to God, begins in a sacrifice which is utter and complete, a sacrifice of all that seems *best*, as well as all that is bad. And he knew, too, that at the end of that road all the best things will come back—in a form in which there is no longer any trace of illusion. Love? Tenderness? Beauty? They are all eternal Forms which are just different aspects of the eternal Good. *We* only know them now in their reflections: we shall not see the realities till the reflections are left behind.

I hope I have made it clear elsewhere that I am not blind to the dangers of this doctrine. Just as the good Christian or the good Vaishnava is alive to the dangers of a kind of spiritual eroticism on the one hand, and, on the other, of a sentimentality which can only be called sloppy, so the believer in the Wisdom Path sees clearly enough the danger of atrophied feeling and sterility of emotion without any following rush of all-embracing love. It is not wise to forget that the Royal Path which Plato is explaining is only possible for the "very rare and golden natures." But at least it should be possible for us who are brought up in the Christian religion of love to understand how Plato's "union with the Good" includes love at its highest—in an actually higher form, that is, than love as we are bound to feel it. For in the love we feel, whether it is love of our friend or love of God, there is always an element of separateness. We and our friend, we and our God, are distinct from one another. We regard them both as "other": however closely love may unite us, God and our friend remain separate from us. So it is with the philosopher, in the earlier stages of his ascent. Just as we saw that he must first walk by faith, to be exchanged for full knowledge later, so we find that he advances first by the power of love. Again and again Plato insists upon the necessity of his being a veritable lover of truth and reality: his language in the early part of Book VI is all an emphasis upon the first half of the word "philosophy" or love of wisdom. But when, by the full power of the spirit within him, he has at last "mingled and become incorporate with very Being," love, like faith, is

swallowed up in something greater. Separateness and otherness disappear in identity: the philosopher becomes himself the Good; he and his God, he and his friend, the lover and the loved—all are seen to be one in the unity of the sole spiritual reality. The very word love has become unnecessary, meaningless. We may say that we do not like it: that we would prefer to remain in the condition of separateness which makes possible our human love. Very well: but because we cannot even in thought pass beyond the dualism which we find essential, we have no right to assert that the pure monism which transcends it is a descent to something lower.

The omission of all reference to prayer is difficult to explain without giving offence to many good people. I suppose most Christians will be rather shocked by the assertion that many of the most deeply religious people in the world never pray at all. Yet the assertion is undoubtedly true of many of the most devout Vedantins and Buddhists, who have no interest in life at all except the religious interest. The assertion needs qualification, however. It is very intelligible if by prayer is meant what has cynically been called "besieging God with beggars' petitions." The religious soul can have no need to pray in that sense, for he can have no wants and no fears. But this is not the essence of prayer. It is true that we are beggars—and self-centred beggars—a great part of our time. We beg for the confusion of our enemies and the success of our own undertakings, for abundance of prosperity and increase of all kinds of worldly goods; and it is all on the level of the religion of impatient children whose anxiety about their own welfare is far greater than their trust in an all-kind and all-seeing Providence. But we pray for holiness, too, and for the salvation of others; and to call this mere begging is simply an abuse of language. It is—or should be—part of the real communion with God which is of the essence of prayer. The paradox of prayer remains, of course; there can be no *need* to ask God to care for His world: to do so even seems to imply a lack of trust. And yet the very asking is itself an expression of trust, and an expression of our genuine efforts to identify our will with the supreme will.

All this the Vedantin would gladly allow. But he goes rather farther than we. In struggling towards the goal of union with

the absolute Good, he is struggling towards a state in which prayer and faith and identification of our will with God's are all left behind in the final merging of his whole being in the eternal All-being. Devotion to a personal God, submission of will, ceaseless effort to express our oneness—all these are ladders needed in the ascent. In the final stage they all disappear; and *that* is perfect harmony.

The omission of any sort of worship is now explained. Like faith and prayer, worship implies *some* difference between ourselves and God, some separation which has to be bridged over. But when the spirit has risen in its last ascent, difference and separation are at an end. The soul that is *one* with the Good does not need to worship Good any more.

Have we answered the accusation of coldness and loneliness? Does the religious life still repel us because it is so chilly and so isolated? It must seem so to us, for many plain reasons. How can it seem anything but icy cold to us to leave the glow of the great fire in the cave, and all our companions there, and pass up the ascent to that other world, in which—for a time at least—we shall not even be able to lift our eyes and see the sun of Good? Mystics have spoken of the dark night of the soul: it is a good description of that "steep and rugged pathway" along which the soul must pass, in a forsaken darkness in which even the God we thought we knew is hidden, and the "miraculously greater" Good is not yet revealed.

It will be seen that all this defence of Plato's omissions is bound up with the essential distinction between religion in its most exalted sense, and religion in all the preparatory stages which we know. Plato goes straight to the highest point; naturally we are left behind, stumbling and complaining. And perhaps we have a right to complain that he removes all our props and stays too soon. Not only in the cave, not only during the terribly difficult upward climb, but even in our first sojourn in the "world of the real" we need, and need incessantly, these three pillars of the religious life—faith and prayer and worship. It is not for consolation: we must learn to do without that. It is for the keeping alive of our sense of nearness to the Spirit which is not yet fully revealed: a sense which is still feeling, still emotion, still dependent upon the daily food which even the highest emotion needs; it is not yet the calm and sure per-

ception which lifts the philosopher above emotion. But I do not think we are justified in complaining that Plato has no place for worship as a *social* form of religious expression. I believe it was Carlyle who said that there can be no religion without a Church, " for the action of mind on mind is mystical, infinite; religion, worship, can hardly, perhaps not at all, support itself without this aid." This is the natural view of the Western mind, intent always upon the social side of religion, interested always in its social processes and its social reactions. Plato's view, like the Vedantin's, is quite different. He is intensely interested in the social reactions of religion: is not the Philosopher destined to save the world? But the social processes by which the soul is influenced are not, and cannot be for him, more than preparatory processes, belonging to the " lower level " of religious life, leading the soul up to the entrance to the higher path. And there nothing social enters at all: there is only the individual soul—and God. That is why, as I have so often insisted, the " ideal society " fades away into the background when the sixth and seventh books of the *Republic* are reached. We may blame Plato for not making more of the influences which we find so important: it is quite likely that he never realised the value of the " mystical action of mind on mind," and therefore omits all reference to the danger of forsaking the assembling of ourselves together for worship. But, even if he had realised it to the full, he would not and could not have taken it into account when he begins the real training of the philosophic soul. For in that training the whole essence of the matter is that we turn our backs upon *everything* social, even those elements in social intercourse which to us seem almost divine—devotion at its best, love at its purest, the concord of souls at its highest. We may, indeed, say that we don't like it, dislike it vehemently, in fact, and disbelieve in the possibility of such a completely individualised path to God. But we cannot blame Plato because he refuses to confuse his ideal by mixing into it the elements which we think essential. An Indian Vedantin would find nothing strange in the omissions which puzzle and offend us: it is *our* omissions which puzzle him, as well as our insistence upon matters which he finds unimportant. Witness the thoroughly Platonic saying of a modern Vedantin upon this very subject: " If a young man does not go to church, he ought

to be condemned ; but if an old man goes to church, he ought to be condemned also."[1]

I have, I imagine, led up very successfully to the last count in the indictment : it is a very dangerous as well as an unlovely doctrine. The danger, many will think, is staring at us unashamed from the last paragraph. No wonder Socrates was put to death for subverting religion and corrupting the youth of Athens if this was what he taught ! But the danger is not this at all. It is something far deeper : it is the tendency of the whole teaching to produce and exalt a condition of apathy and self-deception of the most odious kind. We in the West are not children, turning impatiently away from an untried gospel of renunciation just because the syren voices of the world draw us so strongly. We have had our experience and we have learned its lessons. Asceticism had its day—a wasted, useless day : may we never return to it ! Puritanism had its day, too—a gloomy and oppressive day : our escape from it has been a deliverance into a brighter and better life. Our common sense, therefore, is the outcome, not of our desires, but of long ages of trial and error ; it is the sanity of proved experience, and it tells us that the doctrine of Nivritti, of desirelessness and unworldliness, is a fool's doctrine. Shut the door upon the world, and it will come in again by the chimney, in a much fouler form ; sweep the chamber clean of desire, and seven worse devils will enter in. Degrade the body and its legitimate satisfactions, and you will soon have a " rehabilitation de la chair " which will swing the pendulum over on to the side of frank sensuality. It is no use talking at large about renunciation : sanity and moderation are what we all need, with an honestly keen enjoyment of all the good gifts of Providence.

And on whose authority do you degrade the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the society of men and women who, together and as a society, are destined to be the visible church of God on earth ? With what semblance of justification do you wrap yourself round in your mantle of self-righteousness, and sneak out to find a " philosopher's shelter " in which to cower, inert and

[1] *Vivekananda.* Collected works, Mayavati edition. Part IV. An unnecessarily hard saying, perhaps ; but it is only intended to emphasise the cardinal doctrine that, as the soul advances, it must learn to do without the support of a Church, just as it must pass beyond the need for a creed of any sort.

self-absorbed, because the busy rush of healthy human life disturbs the serenity of your unhealthily sensitive soul? Out upon it! Be a man, and do a man's work, and be thankful that, so doing, you can bring happiness to yourself as well as to others.

See, too, how the source of your doctrine betrays its sure tendencies. India claims that she is the home of spirituality, the mother of religions, the fountain head of that other-worldliness which alone regenerates mankind. Does she not boast to-day of her fifty-four lakhs[1] of holy men and women—renouncers all, living out of the world, owning nothing but their begging-bowls, yet owning everything worth having because they have lost their lives to save them? Surely a force mighty enough to raise any nation to the summit of virtue! But look at Hindu India as she is: whatever may be the excellences of her people, energy and capacity for sustained effort are not the most marked of them, nor perhaps are some of the essential social virtues, such as mutual trust and co-operation and the character that makes these possible. You may say that the argument is too double-edged for Christian nations to use safely; but at least it raises a presumption on the side of the criticism we make.[2]

Further, is there not also strong reason to suspect that the whole of this doctrine of "separation from the world" is a subtle product of senility? There was a shrewd pertinence in the retort made by an American to a Vedantist teacher: "You come from a country which has been dead for five thousand years, and you preach renunciation to us!" It is so easy, when powers pass away and the impotence of age creeps on, to evolve a doctrine of dispassion and call it righteousness. But in a healthy and vigorous society your only disciples will be the

[1] That is, five millions four hundred thousand; but how many of them are genuine sannyasins and yogis Heaven only knows.

[2] I think it is probable that the contempt felt, perhaps unconsciously, by a successful imperial nation for a very unsuccessful people whom it has conquered, has caused us to underrate the wisdom and philosophy of the Hindus—even of the ancient Hindus in the days when they were powerful as well as wise. At the same time I am afraid it is useless to deny that some obvious defects in the character as well as in the ability of many of the Hindus are now the chief obstacle in the way of our due appreciation of their nation's enormous contributions to the most vital elements of human good. But because they do not all live up to the grandeur of their ancient wisdom, shall we therefore refuse to recognise its worth?

weaklings and the slackers: they will embrace your gospel, exactly as work-shy beggars will put on the sannyasin's robe, because it covers their feebleness and throws a fair cloak over their laziness. Let us hear no more of your ideal philosopher and his contemplative life; the suffering and evil of the world call aloud for effort and always more effort, and the joy of vigorous life is both the condition and the reward of effort.

Just one word before I begin the last defence. I am not sure what is meant by the contemplative life; but I think it is rather different from a life of somnolence. And, if this world of ours should ever become Christian, will it not be rather amazed by the fact that there was once an age in which the proclaimed followers of Christ were totally unable to appreciate the intrinsic worth of a life spent in prayer and communion with God? But it is not my business to defend such a life. Plato's ideal is different. His philosopher can face without flinching most of the accusations made against him. It would have been odd, indeed, if Socrates had held aloft as our pattern a way of life which failed to make a man a good citizen and a good neighbour. Until the age of fifty, his philosopher-that-is-to-be lives a remarkably strenuous life in the world (apart from the excusable episode of five years spent in meditation and discipline). And after the age of fifty, he has a still more strenuous period of service to pass through before he can finally "take shelter behind the wall." And, as most of his hard work is done without thought of reward, solely for the good of others with no sort of gain for himself, he will bear comparison with most of the sturdy citizens whom we admire.

But the two chief difficulties remain. His goal is always a life of inactivity, of indrawn stillness, of solitude and aloofness, in which, the world forgetting, by the world forgot, he finds his heaven in lonely contemplation of the Good. That, and that alone, is really life. And the path to the goal is the path of self-abnegation. It may or may not deserve the name of asceticism: it may or may not be called a puritanical mode of life; but at least it involves the steady, purposeful shedding of desire and emotion, of interests and enjoyments, till only the husk of a satisfactory life is left.

I will try to grapple finally with the two difficulties. Taking the second first, let me assert, as emphatically as I can, that

the whole value, as well as the sanity, of the path of self-abnegation or "desirelessness" depends upon its gradualness. The spiritual process, like the natural process, does nothing by leaps. For every change there must be slow and patient preparation, and the preparation is usually unseen, and leaves the outer and visible life unchanged. In the spiritual changes of the human soul, these conditions hold absolutely. The process of unwinding ourselves from the meshes of worldly interests needs many years of patient effort; and it must take the form of a slow but very sure change of attitude or of estimate, which will leave unchanged all the outer activities which we rightly call the healthy and necessary conditions of a vigorous life. I have already explained, in an earlier chapter, how the process should take place: how it cannot even begin in youth (normally at least), and how it can go on during middle life without taking anything away from our energy in action or our energy in enjoyment. When the internal, preparatory changes are complete, then and then only the outer life must change too. The royal philosopher may withdraw to his shelter—some time after the age of sixty.[1]

Now the assertion that this gradual change of attitude and estimate is a necessary process in the good life may be defended in two ways. First, for Christians, it should be enough to appeal to the very definite teaching of their Master relating to the change of heart, the unworldliness and the reversal of all popular estimates, which are necessary to salvation. But the appeal seems to have lost its force: strangely enough, it is likely to carry more weight with some non-Christians than with many Christians. For, at the moment when teachers from the East are reminding us that "no one can possibly believe in Providence until he has become absolutely improvident," our fashionable theologians are busy explaining away all the sayings of Christ which convey the same lesson.[2]

[1] Plato seems to make the process begin in childhood. But it must always be remembered that he is only considering the rare golden natures, and that he assumes for these many previous lifetimes of preparation. These golden natures are certainly not normal.

[2] This, at any rate, seems to be the aim of the newest theology. In an extreme form, it has discovered this very satisfactory solution of Christ's most difficult utterances. When He commanded His disciples to be utterly improvident, He really meant that they need not take any thought for the morrow since there was not likely to be any morrow worth taking thought for. A delightful result, surely, of the world-intentness of our age! But it is consoling to remember that religion has always survived the attacks—even of theologians.

We shall do well, therefore, to rely upon a different argument, more in accord with our momentary reverence for science rather than for religion. It may be put in this form. Life as we know it involves continual change, and the change must be progressive in the sense that it must be a movement from less to greater power, from less to greater ability to do and to enjoy. If we use the word in a wide sense, we may say that this means that there must be continual *growth*, if not physical, then mental and moral. When progressive change ceases, then decay sets in, and the beginning of slow death has come. Now, in the human life, increase of physical power ceases fairly early ; but the period of mental growth goes on for a far longer time. This, too, comes to an end at last, and with it there is an end to all increase of purely human power. The fact is obscured for us in two ways. Many people keep the semblance of increase of power by the shrewd use of external instruments, such as position and wealth, very much as an ancient patriarch not only kept but increased his power as he grew older, by the help of his ownership of property and the power and prestige which custom assigned to him. But there is no real internal growth here : the increase of power is all outside the man or woman ; within is gradual decline or movement towards death ; and for this reason many of the possessors of such power become drags upon progress and serious nuisances to their dependents, exactly as many of the patriarchs were (or would have been in a progressive age) a drag upon their families in consequence of their senile debility of mind.

Other people appear to grow in power of what we vaguely call judgment ; and in many cases doubtless an increase of power to apply knowledge and experience does continue far into old age. But that also ceases at last—sooner, perhaps, than old people will admit ; and so once again the mental growth reaches its end, with loss of power not only to learn and apply new knowledge, but to appreciate and use new interests.

What line of growth remains open ? I suppose most of us will agree that moral growth at least is always possible. And this is true, but not without much qualification. It is not a libel on old age to say that many of its virtues are the result of increase of weakness, not of increase of strength ; that decline of appetite, desire and passion sometimes lends to age a gentleness

which is good by contrast with the turbulence of earlier years ; and so it may happen that many a stormy and rather unlovely life ends in a tranquil and almost golden sunset. But that is an illusion, not a reality of growth of strength. If, however, the moral growth of mature age is real, then there *is* an increase of inner power behind it. Of what power ? Not physical, clearly, nor mental ; but what then ? Here the Platonic doctrine (the doctrine, that is, of all religion) brings its light. We may go on from strength to strength, in spite of the decline of all human powers, in one way only—by discovering the secret of spiritual growth. By this one way, decay and death are held at arm's length : are defied, rather, or swallowed up in victory ; for there is no term set to this growth : increase of the power of the spirit has no limit and no end, and he who finds the secret goes on triumphantly *living*, passing on, if his body endures, into " the best that is yet to be " of human existence, or, if his body dies, greeting its death with the gratitude of one who sees opened to him the door to endless life.

Herein lies the valid answer to the question—why should I turn away at last from satisfactions and enjoyments and all the interests of flesh and world ? It is because, otherwise, you die while you are yet living : because human faculty and human power of doing and enjoying wax and wane, grow and then decay, give good life but end in death ; and, if we would have life and have it more abundantly we must root it in some different faculty and power. The superhuman faculty of *knowing*, and the power of *being* which it brings with it, are limitless and endless, for they are related to the infinite and eternal ; find them, cultivate them, anchor yourself to their strength alone, and decay and death can have no more meaning for you. This is the growth in wisdom which Plato describes as the foundation of all righteousness and the creative source of all good ; it is the growth in freedom which the old Hindu philosophers describe as the condition of liberation from the wheel of births and deaths, of the passage from a life which is always running down to death, to a life in which there is no weakening and no decay ; it is the growth in grace which the Christian truth proclaims as the beginning of life eternal, and the victory over death.

But still it is not clear why there need be any deliberate turning away from the healthy use of the human faculties,

physical or mental, and from the enjoyment of their exercise, even from interest in the results of their exercise. Why should not the higher powers begin their growth side by side with the development of the lower ones? Why must there be a deliberate putting behind us of the good results of human powers, while these are still growing? The answer must be a double one: first, nothing of the kind is necessary—at least, nothing in the way of sour renunciation or gloomy self-denial; but secondly, a very real "putting behind us" *is* necessary, because the conditions of the final growth require it. The different stages of growth do undoubtedly overlap, and must do so: is not that part of the healthy gradualness of all growth? But each higher stage does eventually leave the lower behind. Thus, the mental growth really supersedes the physical, as the latter reaches its limit. A middle-aged man of science or administrator may still play cricket; but not with a schoolboy's devotion, nor with that worship of the physical which is healthy and right in the young. So, too, the spiritual growth really supersedes the mental, not discarding it suddenly, but becoming gradually independent of it. As it increases, devotion to and worship of all the mental powers and their results will, necessarily, pass away: *that* is the essential thing; but the cessation of all the activities of the mental stage is neither essential nor good. In other words, the spiritual growth *must* bring with it a very real shifting of interest: the man or woman who is really on the way to "philosophy" will not any longer make a pursuit of art or poetry or science or politics or anything else; but equally certainly he will not shut his eyes to a beautiful picture, nor refuse to read (or even to write) a poem or a scientific work, nor hesitate to take the chair at a political meeting.

It is now time to turn to the far more difficult question concerning the dangers of both process and goal. Let us face the difficulty fairly and squarely by admitting at once that the dangers are as real as they are insidious. Every step on the path is surrounded by pitfalls; every upward stage has a dozen base copies beside it, each resembling the better state, and each an arch delusion; while the goal itself is set among phantasms of the real, so like it in appearance that even the best of men may be deceived. Does this make it a false path or a false goal? The old Greeks were wise enough to know that "the

good is always difficult " ; we have considerably better authority for saying that the way is narrow that leads to the Good, and few are they who find it. The burden of defence would seem to lie upon those who would have it that the path must be both safe and easy, not upon those who—with Plato—see it as a very razor's edge of danger. But I fancy that it is the kind of danger rather than the simple fact of danger which offends the Western mind. Though some Christians appear to have forgotten that salvation cannot be made easy, most will admit that the Christian path has its dangers too, such as spiritual pride and false emotion and a faith that is often very heated but fails to burn out evil or purify the soul. But the peculiar danger of apathy to the whole pressing business of life is not one to which we are prone ; nor is the cognate danger of letting our right to happiness lapse without having first found the good which is greater than happiness. And we cannot in the least understand how it can be worth while to risk these dangers in order to become the philosopher, the sage, the silent one, who does nothing except *know*, and can never tell what he knows, whose ideal it is to sit, motionless, sightless, soundless, desireless, until his useless body leaves him free to go to another world.

Now the dangers are very real, as we all admit. Their reality is written large in the history of the Hindu and Buddhist East. Moreover, the dangers are so close to the right path that, when men are wise, they insist upon every sort of stringent safeguard barring the entrance to all inexperienced souls, requiring that none shall attempt the path without a genuine guide, applying frequent tests even to the oldest disciples, and so weeding out and sending back to the easier path of social duty all who are in peril of becoming " bad examples of philosophy." These safeguards are explained fully in the Indian expositions of the religious life. I think it will be enough here to end with a warning, which is at the same time an admission that the opposing instinct of the Western temperament is, in a way, both sound and true.

The way of religion which I have traced in Plato's writing is the Eastern way. The Western way does not differ in essentials : but some differences there must and will be. The Eastern teachers of Vedanta seldom, perhaps never, understand this ; and they fail to grasp the full pertinence of our fundamental

assumptions. They think that we must necessarily believe, as they do, that the world is a poor place, and life a rather dismal affair. We have no intention of letting the world be a poor place, nor will we regard life as anything but a very healthy and joyous adventure. They assume (and cannot think that the assumption needs any proof) that religion must have its roots in sorrow, in pessimism, in the sadness of human existence. We know there is sorrow enough, but happiness and its possibilities are the great facts we see, and therefore we regard pessimism as a blight and a sad view of life as a disease to be stamped out. Are we not right? Our buoyancy is the secret of our virtues and of our good endeavours. We are out to make the world better: our mission may not have been a very conspicuous success so far, but our very optimism means that we shall go on in spite of centuries of failure. But it is *not* all failure. There *is* progress, and it is not all the progress in material things which means increase of complexity; deeper foundations are being laid, and deeper results are even now apparent. We are out to make human life happier and fuller, not to give it up as a hopeless task, and withdraw into the vision of a hypothetical superhuman existence. In this, too, we are succeeding, fitfully it may be, but by no means slowly. And, with these tasks on our hands, we do not intend to decry the worth of the instruments which we use, or of the conditions of life which we find important. If our science is only relatively true, the relation is to something very vital; if our philosophy belongs to "the lower line" of reality, at least it makes us active, vigorous and hopeful; if we are too much obsessed by the sense of "mine" and "thine," this is, at any rate, preferable to the watery worship of a common good, in which "good" is lost in the over-emphasis of "community."

I speak as one of the West, believing in its mission and its work. But, granting that these are good, is it not true that, amid all our activities, religion tends to slip away unnoticed? I do not mean its reflected forms: they are numerous enough and everywhere obvious, in our politics, in our customs, in our talk and thought; as a problem which is always interesting, as a consolation which is often valuable, as a safeguard which is sometimes (and for some grades of people) very salutary, as a ground of appeal when common sense fails. We are not without

religion : and in forms far higher than these. But as the real element in our real lives, as the one great interest among our many interests, as the true goal behind all our endeavours, as the background which gives meaning to all our activities—is it this ? We have many aristocrats of virtue, as Plato calls the best citizens ; we have many more timocrats ; perhaps we have fewer democrats and tyrants than ever before in the history of the world. It is good : but have we many Kings ? Every individual life must be crowned at last with the invisible crown of the royal philosopher : do we even aim at this ? The way is very dangerous, we say ; certainly : no one has ever discovered a safe road from this-worldliness to other-worldliness. Anyone who could devise a really satisfactory compromise would be the most ingenious malefactor humanity has ever seen. But the path of Socrates and Plato, if I have read it right, can be followed by any vigorous spirit in the West, without loss of vigour or of any kind of good, if he or she will master the conditions. In the long journey of life we do not at first either see or care about the ultimate goal. We travel all the better for our short-range vision : the goals of the middle distances are on the right road, and they are tremendously real—until we have passed them. But in the later stages of the journey we do not move at all unless the ultimate goal is seen and known for what it is ; no loiterer or dreamer will ever see it : only those who have travelled well and arduously. And then they will move faster and more actively than before, though we who are behind them will perhaps not know that they are moving at all. We have two coats for the journey : the one we wear is the garment of right ambition to do things well and to enjoy things well, and of intense interest in both the doing and the enjoying. That is entirely right ; this garment of activity is what we can understand and use for good ; the other coat—the garment of pure religion—is, to speak plainly, rather a nuisance than a help, for, if we carry it at all, we cannot wear it while we move. But, in the last stages, this is the only coat which will serve us : the other we must give away to anyone who asks for it. Religion is thus the great supplanter. Esau is always a great hunter and a really fine man ; but, if the old allegory had not been distorted in the telling, we should see that Jacob, the weaker twin, is the one who is dear to God, and must inevitably supplant his

brother and win the blessing which can be given only to one.

Is the meaning clear ? The active and achieving West is right all through—except in the one thing needful. We individual members of it have yet to discover how—without any halting—we may see the real goal, change the garments of interest, give the supplanter his place, and so at the end find for ourselves the path of infinite progression which, on a different level, we believe belongs to the human society for which and in which we live our human lives.

# INDEX AND GLOSSARY


Adeimantus, 49
Adyatmavidya (Knowledge of Reality), 29, 97
Alcibiades, 111
Ananda Acharya, viii
Aristocracy, Chap. X
Aristotle, 5, 77, 178
Arithmetic, 124
Arnold, Sir Edwin, ix
Art, Chap. XI
Art of conduct, 46
Ashramas (the four periods of life), 147
Astronomy, 125
Atman (the Spirit of Eternal Reality within each individual), 18, 109, 141, 209
Augustine, St., 228

Bacon, Francis, 131
*Bhagavad Gita* (the Divine Song), ix, 8
Bhakti (religious devotion), 25
Bhakti Yoga (the religion or path of devotion), 139, 239
Bosanquet, Bernard, 223 n.
Brahm (the Absolute, the final Reality), 21, 98, 137
Buddhi (the higher faculty of will and judgment), 141, 175

Carlyle, Thomas, 249
Castes, 23, 58, 71, 238
Cave, Allegory of, 119
Cephalus, 43
Chastity, 88
Communism, 77
Community of pursuits, 81 ff.
Community of husbands, wives and children, 82 ff.
Competition, 46
Comte, Auguste, 131
Concentration, 140

Das, Babu Bhagavan, viii
Democracy, Chap. X
Dharana (Concentration), 142
Dharma (Religious duty and excellence), 25, 30, 96
Dhyana (Meditation), 142
Dialectic, 128, 142, 198
Dialogues referred to—
  Cratylus, 34
  Laws, 3, 36, 155, 189
  Phædo, 3, 9
  Philebus, 39
  Politicus, 36, 151, 189
  Protagoras, 33
  Symposium, 9
  Timæus, 34, 131
Dikæarchus, 38
Dikaiosune, vii, 31
Discrimination, 141
Dutifulness, Chap. II

Education, Chap. IV, 124 ff.
Epithumia, 28
Er, Myth of, 204
Eschatology, 253
Eudaimonia, 53
Evolution and Involution, 99

Faith, 132, 208, 243
Family, 84 ff.
Fortitude, 73

Geometry, 125
Glaucon, 49
Gnana (true Wisdom), 29, 97
Gnana Yoga (the path of Wisdom), 139, 147, 239
Goethe, 53
Good, The, Chap. VIII
Grote, 33, 38, 77
Guru (Spiritual guide), 1 and *passim*. See 139
Gymnastic, 124

Harmonics, 126
Hobson, J. A., viii
Homer, 193

Ideas, Theory of, 29
Ignorance, 109
Imitation, Chap. XI
Immortality, Chap. XI
Immortality and Unity, 175

Jowett, B., 228
Justice, 73

Kama (sense—pleasure and desire), 28 n.
Kant, 5
Karma (action and reaction ; the law of results), 146, 179, 214
Knowledge and Knowing, Chaps. VII and VIII
Krishna, 20

Liberty and Equality, 170
Logistikon (the faculty of reason), 28

Maitra, Harendranath, viii
Makaria (Bliss), 53
Manas (Mind), 97, 109, 141, 175
Manu, 23, 55, 71
Marriage, 84 ff.
Matter, 98, 109
Maya (illusion), 21, 98, 109
Mē On (that which has no real existence), 109
Meditation, 140
Moksha (Liberation), 25, 142
Motion, Science of, 125
Mukti (Freedom from the chain of births), 25
Muni (the Seer or the Silent One), 101
Mysticism and Mysteries, 233

Nivritti (withdrawal), 25
Non-attachment, 88
Nous, 18, 32, 78, 109, Chap. VIII, 131, 138, 153

Oligarchy, Chap. X
One-pointedness, 88
Opinion, Chap. VII
Orpheus, 197, 213

Path of Pursuit, Chap. II, 96
Path of Religion, Chap. II, Chap. VI
Philosopher-King, 93, Chap. IX
Philosophy, Meaning of, Chap. VII
Philosophy, Rule of, 33, 93, Chap. IX
Plutarch, 38
Poetry, Chap. XI
Polemarchus, 44
Poverty, 88
Prakriti (the Stuff of Nature), 21, 98, 109
Pralaya (the twilight of the day of Evolution), 151
Prayer, 247
Protagoras, 7
Prudence, 73
Purusha (the Spirit), 18
Pythagoras, 5, 13, 35, 127, 134, 180, 193, 197

Qualities, The Three, 20 ff., 38 ff.

Rajarshi (Philosopher-King), 150
Rajas (emotional energy), 20, 55, 74 ff., 168
Ramanathan, P., viii
Reincarnation, 180, 212
Religion, Double meaning of, Chap. VI, 101
Religion and Faith, 132
Rhetoricians, 7
Rishi Rajah (Philosopher-King), 150

Samadhi (Condition of super-consciousness), 141
Samskar (complete latent memory), 215
Samvit (spiritual faculty), 29
Sannyasin (a disciple who has renounced the world), 139
Sattva (equilibrium, goodness), 20, 55
Sciences, 124 ff.
Shakti (power), 25
Shraddha (faith), 139
Socrates (Character of), Chap. I
Sophists, 7
Soul, 203, 209
Spinoza, 53, 217
Spiritual growth, 254
State, The Ideal, 54, 76 ff.
Swarupananda, Swami, viii
Swedenborg, 225

Tamas (inertia, ignorant desire), 20, 55
Tawney, R. H., viii
Temperance, 73
Temple, Rev. W., 161, 184, 190, 244
Thrasymachus, 7, 44
Thumos (emotional energy), 28, 168, 182
Timocracy, Chap. X

Utilitarianism, 33, 48

Vairagya (conversion from the attraction of desire), 29
Vaishnava (a devotee of Vishnu, the Mercy and Love element in the godhead), 246
Vedanta (defined), viii, Chap. II
Vidya (Knowledge), 8, 29
Viveka (Discrimination), 142
Vivekananda, Swami, viii, 140, 250 n.

Women, Equality with men, 89
Worship, 249

Yoga (uniting: the process of uniting the soul with God), 9, 139, 146, 239

Printed in Great Britain at
*The Mayflower Press, Plymouth.*
William Brendon & Son, Ltd.

Date Due

D 30 '40

FACULTY

DE 12 42

28 '4

0 24 '47

0 19 '48

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

IDEAL BOOK SHOP Inc.
GOOD BOOKS
BOUGHT and SOLD
1 W. 125th St., N. Y. C.
HARLEM 7-9397

JC71 .P6U83
The message of Plato, a re-interpretatin
Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 00025 8030